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WOMEN IN MODERN INDUSTRY

"WHAT is woman but an enemy of friendship, an unavoidable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable affliction, a constantly flowing source of tears, a wicked work of nature covered with a shining varnish ?"—SAINT CHRYSOSTOM.

"And wo in winter tyme with wakying a-nyghtes,
To rise to the ruel to rock the cradel,
Both to kard and to kembe, to clouten and to wasche,
To rubbe and to rely, russhes to pilie
That reuthe is to rede othere in ryme shewe
The wo of these women that wonyeth in Cotes." [1]

LANGLAND : *Piers Ploughman*, x. 77.

"Two justices of the peace, the mayor or other head officer of any city (etc.) and two aldermen . . . may appoint any such woman as is of the age of 12 years and under the age of 40 years and unmarried and forth of service . . . to be retained or serve by the year, week or day for such wages and in such reasonable sort as they shall think meet ; and if any such woman shall refuse so to serve, then it shall be lawful for the said justices (etc.) to commit such woman to ward until she shall be bounden to serve."—*Statute of Labourers*, 1563.

"Every woman spinner's wage shall be such as, following her labour duly and painfully, she may make it account to."—JUSTICES OF WILTSHIRE : *Assessment of Wages*, 1604.

"Sometimes one feels that one dare not contemplate too closely the life of our working women, it is such a grave reproach."—Miss ANNA TRACEY, *Factory Inspector*, 1913.

"The State has trampled on its subjects for 'ends of State' ; it has neglected them ; it is beginning to act consciously for them. . . . The progressive enrichment of human life and the remedy of its ills is not a private affair. It is a public charge. Indeed it is the one and noblest field of corporate action. The perception of that truth gives rise to the new art of social politics."—B. KIRKMAN GRAY.

[1] *I.e.* Cots or cottages.

WOMEN IN MODERN INDUSTRY

BY

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"A HISTORY OF FACTORY LEGISLATION"

WITH A CHAPTER CONTRIBUTED BY
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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE.

It may be well to give a brief explanation of the scheme of the present work. Part I. was complete in its present form, save for unimportant corrections, before the summer of 1914. The outbreak of war necessitated some delay in publication, after which it became evident that some modification in the scheme and plan of the book must be made. The question was, whether to revise the work already accomplished so as to bring it more in tune with the tremendous events that are fresh in all our minds. For various reasons I decided not to do this, but to leave the earlier chapters as they stood, save for bringing a few figures up to date, and to treat of the effects of the war in a separate chapter. I was influenced in taking this course by the idea that even if the portions written in happy ignorance of approaching trouble should now appear out of date and out of focus, yet future students of social history might find a special interest in the fact that the passages in question describe the situation of women workers as it appeared almost immediately before the great upheaval. Moreover, Chapter IVa. contained a section on

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German women in Trade Unions. I had no material to re-write this section; I did not wish to omit it. The course that seemed best was to leave it precisely as it stood, and the same plan has been adopted with all the pre-war chapters.

The main plan of the book is to give a sketch or outline of the position of working women, with special reference to the effects of the industrial revolution on her employment, taking "industrial revolution" in its broader sense, not as an event of the late eighteenth century, but as a continuous process still actively at work. I have aimed at description rather than theory. Some of the current theories about women's position are of great interest, and I make no pretence to an attitude of detachment in regard to them, but it certainly appears to me that we need more facts and knowledge before theory can be based on a sure foundation. Here and there I have drawn my own conclusions from what I saw and heard, but these conclusions are mostly provisional, and may well be modified in the light of clearer knowledge.

I am fully conscious of an inadequacy of treatment and of certain defects in form. Women's industry is a smaller subject than men's, but it is even more complicated and difficult. There are considerable omissions in my book. I have not, for instance, discussed, save quite incidentally, the subject of the industrial employment of married women or the subject of domestic service, omissions which are partly due to my knowledge that studies of these questions were in process of pre-

paration by hands more capable than mine. There are other omissions which are partly due to the lack or unsatisfactory nature of the material. A standard history of the Industrial Revolution does not yet exist (Monsieur Mantoux's valuable book covers only the earlier period), and the necessary information has to be collected from miscellaneous sources. In dealing with the effects of war, my treatment is necessarily most imperfect. The situation throughout the autumn, winter, and spring 1914–15, was a continually shifting one, and to represent it faithfully is a most difficult task. Nor can we for years expect to gauge the changes involved. With all our efforts to see and take stock of the social and economic effects of war, we who watch and try to understand the social meanings of the most terrible convulsion in history probably do not perceive the most significant reactions. That the position of industrial women must be considerably modified we cannot doubt; but the modifications that strike the imagination most forcibly now, such as the transference of women to new trades, may possibly not appear the most important in twenty or thirty years' time. Even so, perhaps, a contemporary sketch of the needs of working women; of the success or failure of our social machinery to supply and keep pace with those needs at a time of such tremendous stress and tension, may not be altogether without interest.

I have to express my great indebtedness to Mr. Mallon, Secretary of the Anti-Sweating League, who has given me the benefit of his unrivalled knowledge

and experience in a chapter on women's wages. I have also to thank Miss Mabel Lawrence, who for a short time assisted me in the study of women in Unions, and both then and afterwards contributed many helpful suggestions to the work she shared with me. To the Labour Department I am indebted for kind and much appreciated permission to use its library; to Miss Elspeth Carr for drawing my attention to the "Petition of the Poor Spinners," an interesting document which will be found in the Appendix; and to many Trade Union secretaries and others for their kindness in allowing me to interview them and presenting me with documents. Miss Mary Macarthur generously loaned a whole series of the Trade Union League Reports, which were of the greatest service in tracing the early history of the League. I regret that Mr. Tawney's book on Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Trades; Messrs. Bland, Brown, and Tawney's valuable collection of documents on economic history; and the collection of letters from working women, entitled "Maternity," all came into my hands too late for me to make as much use of them as I should have liked to do.

B. L. H.

HAMPSTEAD, *September* 1915.

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INTRODUCTORY

LITTLE attention has been given until quite recent times to the position of the woman worker and the special problems concerning her industrial and commercial employment. The historical material relating to the share of women in industry is extremely scanty. Women in mediaeval times must have done a very large share of the total work necessary for carrying on social existence, but the work of men was more specialised, more differentiated, more picturesque. It thus claimed and obtained a larger share of the historian's attention. The introduction of machinery in the eighteenth century effected great changes, and for the first time the reactions of the work on the workers began to be considered. Women and children who had previously been employed in their own homes or in small workshops were now collected in factories, drilled to work in large numbers together. The work was not at first very different, but the environment was enormously altered. The question of the child in industry at first occupied attention almost to the exclusion of women. But the one led naturally to the other. The woman in industry could no longer be ignored: she had become an economic force.

The position of the industrial woman in modern

times is closely related, one way or another, to the industrial revolution, but the relation cannot be stated in any short or easy formula. The reaction of modern methods on woman's labour is highly complex and assumes many forms. The pressure on the woman worker which causes her to be employed for long hours, low wages, in bad conditions, and with extreme insecurity of employment, is frequently supposed to be due to the development of industry on a larger scale. It is, in my view, due rather to the survival of social conditions of the past in an age when an enormous increase in productive power has transformed the conditions of production. New institutions and new social conditions are needed to suit the change in the conditions of production. It is not the change in the material environment which is to blame, so much as the failure of organised society so far to understand and control the material changes. The capitalist employer organised industry on the basis of a " reserve of labour," and on the principle of employing the cheapest workers he could get, not out of original sin, or because he was so very much worse than other people, but simply because it was the only way he knew of, and no one was there to indicate an alternative course—much less compel him to take it. Much more guilty than the cotton-spinners or dock companies were the wealthy governing classes, who permitted the conditions of work to be made inhuman, and yet trampled on the one flower the people had plucked from their desolation—the joy of union and fellowship ; who allowed a system of casual labour to become established, and then prated about the bad habits and irregularity which were the results of their own folly.

Organised society had hardly begun to understand the needs and implications of the industrial revolution until quite late in the nineteenth century, and the failure of statesmanlike foresight has been especially disastrous to women, because of their closer relationship to the family. There is no economic necessity under present circumstances for women to work so long, so hard, and for such low wages as they do; on the contrary, we know now that it is bad economy that they should be so employed. But the subordinate position of the girl and the woman in the family, the lack of a tradition of association with her fellows, has reacted unfavourably on her economic capacity in the world of competitive trade. She is preponderantly an immature worker; she expects, quite reasonably, humanly and naturally, to marry. Whether her expectation is or is not destined to be fulfilled, it constitutes an element of impermanence in her occupational career which reacts unfavourably on her earnings and conditions of employment.

The tradition of obedience, docility and isolation in the family make it hard for the young girl-worker to assert her claims effectively; both her ignorance and her tradition of modesty make it difficult for her to voice the requirements of decent living, some of the most essential of which are taboo—not to be spoken of to a social superior or an individual of the opposite sex. The whole circumstances of her life make her employment an uncertain matter, contingent upon all sorts of outside circumstances, which have little or nothing to do with her own industrial capacity. In youth, marriage may at any time take her out of the economic struggle and render wage-earning superfluous and unnecessary. On the other

hand, the sudden pressure of necessity, bereavement, or sickness or unemployment of husband or bread-winning relative, may throw a woman unexpectedly on the labour market. It is a special feature of women's employment that, unlike the work of men, who for the most part have to labour from early youth to some more or less advanced age, women's work is subject to considerable interruption, and is contingent on family circumstances, whence it comes about that women may not always need paid work, but when they do they often want it so badly that they are ready to take anything they can get. The woman worker also is more susceptible to class influences than are her male social equals, and charity and philanthropy often tend in some degree to corrupt the loyalty and divert the interest of working women from their own class. These are some of the reasons why associations for mutual protection and assistance have been so slow in making way among women workers.

The protection of the State, though valuable as far as it goes, has been inadequate: how inadequate can be seen in the Reports of the Women Factory Inspectors, who, in spite of their insufficient numbers, take so large a share in the administration of the Factory Act. Their Reports, however, do not reach a large circle. The Insurance Act has been the means of a more startling propaganda. The results following the working of this Act shew that although women are longer lived than men, they have considerably more sickness. The claims of women for sick benefit had been underestimated, and many local insurance societies became nearly insolvent in consequence. A cry of malingering was raised in various quarters, and we were asked to believe that excessive claims could be prevented by

stricter and more careful administration. This solution of the problem, however, is quite inadequate to explain the facts. There may have been some malingering, but it has occurred chiefly in cases where the earnings of the workers were so low as to be scarcely above the sickness benefit provided by the Act, or even below it. In other cases the excess claims were due to the fact that medical advice and treatment was a luxury the women had previously been unable to afford even when they greatly needed it ; or to the fact that they had previously continued to go to work when unfit for the exertion, and now at last found themselves able to afford a few days' rest and nursing ; or, finally, to the unhealthy conditions in which they were compelled to live and work. As Miss Macarthur stated before the Departmental Committee on Sickness Benefit Claims, " Low wages, and all that low wages involve in the way of poor food, poor housing, insufficient warmth, lack of rest and of air, and so forth, necessarily predispose to disease ; and although such persons may, at the time of entering into insurance, have been, so far as they knew, in a perfectly normal state of health, their normal state is one with no reserve of health and strength to resist disease." Excessive claims may or may not, the witness went on to show, be associated with extremely low wages. Thus the cotton trade, which is the best paid of any great industry largely employing women, nevertheless shows a high proportion of claims. Miss Macarthur made an urgent recommendation (in which the present writer begs to concur), that when any sweeping accusation of malingering is brought against a class of insured persons, medical enquiry should be made into the conditions under which those women work. If the

conditions that produce excessive claims were once clearly known and realised, it is the convinced opinion of the present writer that those conditions would be changed by the pressure of public opinion, not so much out of sentiment or pity—though sentiment and pity are badly needed—but out of a clear perception of the senseless folly and loss that are involved in the present state of things. Year by year, and week by week, the capitalist system is allowed to use up the lives of our women and girls, taking toll of their health and strength, of their nerves and energy, of their capacity, their future, and the future of their children after them. And all this, not for any purpose ; not as it is with the soldier, who dies that something greater than himself may live ; for no purpose whatever, except perhaps saving the trouble of thought. So far as wealth is the object of work, it is practically certain that the national wealth, or indeed the output of war material, would be much greater if it were produced under more humane and more reasonable conditions, with a scientific disposition of hours of work and the use of appropriate means for keeping up the workers' health and strength. A preliminary and most important step, it should be said, would be a considerable reinforcement of the staff of women factory inspectors.

Nor do conditions of work alone make up the burden of the heavy debt against society for the treatment of women workers. Housing conditions, though no doubt greatly improved, especially in towns, are often extremely bad, and largely responsible for the permanent ill-health suffered by so many married women in the working class, by the non-wage-earning group, perhaps not much less than by the industrial woman-

worker.[1] Two other questions occur in this connection, both of great importance. First, the question of the relation of the employment of the young girl to her health after marriage—a subject which appears to have received little scientific attention. Only a minority of women are employed at any one time, but a large majority of young girls are employed, and it follows that the majority of older women *must have been employed* in those critical years of girlhood and young womanhood, which have so great an influence on the constitution and character for the future. The conditions and kind of employment from this point of view would afford material for a volume in itself, but the subject needs medical knowledge for its satisfactory handling, and a laywoman can but indicate it and pass on. Second, the need of making medical advice and treatment more accessible. This would involve the removal of restrictions and obstacles which, however necessary under a scheme of Health Insurance, appear in practice to rob that scheme of at least half its right to be considered as a National Provision for the health of women.[2]

It will appear in the following pages that I see little reason to believe in any decline and fall of women from a golden age in which they did only work which was " suitable," and that in the bosoms of their families. The records of the domestic system that have come down to us are no doubt picturesque enough, but the cases which have been preserved in history or fiction were probably the aristocracy of industry, under which were the very poor, of whom we know little. There

[1] Departmental Committee on Sickness Benefit Claims, Evidence 40446, Bondfield.

[2] *Ibid.* 40462, Bondfield.

must also have been a class of single women wage-earners who were probably even more easy to exploit in old times than they are now, the opportunities for domestic service being much more limited and worse paid. The working woman does not appear to me to be sliding downwards into the "chaos of low-class industries," rather is she painfully, though perhaps for the most part unconsciously, working her way upwards out of a more or less servile condition of poverty and ignorance into a relatively civilised state, existing at present in a merely rudimentary form. She has attained at least to the position of earning her own living and controlling her own earnings, such as they are. She has statutory rights against her employer, and a certain measure of administrative protection in enforcing them. The right to a living wage, fair conditions of work, and a voice in the collective control over industry are not yet fully recognised, but are being claimed more and more articulately, and can less and less be silenced and put aside. The woman wage-earner indeed appears in many ways socially in advance of the middle and upper class woman, who is still so often economically a mere parasite. Woman's work may still be chaotic, but the chaos, we venture to hope, indicates the throes of a new social birth, not the disintegration of decay.

Among much that is sad, tragic and disgraceful in the industrial exploitation of women, there is emerging this fact, fraught with deepest consolation: the woman herself is beginning to think. Nothing else at long last can really help her; nothing else can save us all. There are now an increasing number of women workers who do not sink their whole energies in the petty and personal, or restrict their aims to the earning

and spending what they need for themselves and those more or less dependent on them. They are able to appreciate the newer wants of society, the claim for more leisure and amenity of life, for a share in the heritage of England's thought and achievements, for better social care of children, for the development of a finer and deeper communal consciousness. This is the new spirit that is beginning to dawn in women.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER I.

SKETCH OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN ENGLAND BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.

THE traces of women in economic and industrial history are unmistakable, but the record of their work is so scattered, casual, and incoherent that it is difficult to derive a connected story therefrom. We know enough, however, to disprove the old misconception that women's industrial work is a phenomenon beginning with the nineteenth century.

It seems indeed not unlikely that textile industry, perhaps also agriculture and the taming of the smaller domestic animals, were originated by women, their dawning intelligence being stimulated to activity by the needs of children. Professor Karl Pearson in his interesting essay, *Woman as Witch*, shows that many of the folklore ceremonies connected with witchcraft associate the witch with symbols of agriculture, the pitchfork, and the plough, as well as with the broom and spindle, and are probably the fossil survivals, from a remote past, of a culture in which the activities of the women were relatively more prominent than they are now. The witch is a degraded form of the old priestess, cunning in the knowledge of herbs and medicine, and

preserving in spells and incantations such wisdom as early civilisation possessed. In Thüringen, Holda or Holla is a goddess of spinning and punishes idle persons. Only a century ago the women used to sing songs to Holla as they dressed their flax. In Swabia a broom is carried in procession on Twelfth Night, in honour of the goddess Berchta. The "wild women" or spirits associated with wells or springs are frequently represented in legends as spinning; they come to weddings and spin, and their worship is closely connected with the distaff as a symbol.

Women are also the first architects; the hut in widely different parts of the world—among Kaffirs, Fuegians, Polynesians, Kamtchatdals—is built by women. Women are everywhere the primitive agriculturists, and work in the fields of Europe to-day. Women seem to have originated pottery, while men usually ornamented and improved it. Woman "was at first, and is now, the universal cook, preserving food from decomposition and doubling the longevity of man. Of the bones at last she fabricates her needles and charms. . . . From the grasses around her cabin she constructs the floor-mat, the mattress and the screen, the wallet, the sail. She is the mother of all spinners, weavers, upholsterers, sail-makers."

The evidence of anthropology thus hardly bears out the assertion frequently made (recently, *e.g.*, by Dr. Lionel Tayler in *The Nature of Woman*) that woman does not originate. A much more telling demonstration of the superiority of man in handicraft would be to show that when he takes over a woman's idea he usually brings it to greater technical perfection than she has done. "Men, liberated more or less from the tasks of hunting and fighting, gradually took up the

occupations of women, specialised them and developed them in an extraordinary degree. . . . Maternity favours an undifferentiated condition of the various avocations that are grouped around it; it is possible that habits of war produced a sense of the advantages of specialised and subordinated work. In any case the fact itself is undoubted and it has had immense results on civilisation."

Man has infinitely surpassed woman in technical skill, scientific adaptation, and fertility of invention; yet the rude beginnings of culture and civilisation, of the crafts that have so largely made us what we are, were probably due to the effort and initiative of primitive woman, engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the rude and hostile forces of her environment, to satisfy the needs of her offspring and herself.

I do not propose, however, to enter into a discussion of the position of primitive woman, alluring as such a task might be from some points of view. When we come to times nearer our own and of which written record survives, it is remarkable that the further back we go the more completely women appear to be in possession of textile industry. The materials are disappointing: there is little that can serve to explain fully the industrial position of women or to make us realise the conditions of their employment. But as to the fact there can be no doubt. Nor can it be questioned that women were largely employed in other industries also. The women of the industrial classes have always worked, and worked hard. It is only in quite modern times, so far as I can discover, that the question, whether some kinds of work were not too hard for women, has been raised at all.

Servants in Husbandry.—It is quite plain that

women have always done a large share of field work. The Statute of Labourers, 23 Edw. III. 1349, imposed upon women equally with men the obligation of giving service when required, unless they were over sixty, exercised a craft or trade, or were possessed of means or land of their own, or already engaged in service, and also of taking only such wages as had been given previous to the Black Death and the resulting scarcity of labour. In 1388, the statute 12 Richard II. c. 3, 4 and 5, forbids any servant, man or woman, to depart out of the place in which he or she is employed, at the end of the year's service, without a letter patent, and limits a woman labourer's wages to six shillings per annum. It also enacts that "he or she which use to labour at the plough" shall continue at the same work and not be put to a "mystery or handicraft." In 1444 the statute 23 Henry VI. c. 13 fixes the wages of a woman servant in husbandry at ten shillings per annum with clothing worth four shillings and food. In harvest a woman labourer was to have two pence a day and food, "and such as be worthy of less shall take less."

Thorold Rogers says that in the thirteenth century women were employed in outdoor work, and especially as assistants to thatchers. He thinks that, "estimated proportionately, their services were not badly paid," but that, allowing for the different value of money, women got about as much for outdoor work as women employed on farms get now. After the Plague, however, the wages paid women as thatchers' helps were doubled, and before the end of the fifteenth century were increased by 125 per cent. A statute of 1495 fixed the wages of women labourers and other labourers at the same amount, viz. 2½d a day, or 4½d. if without board. At a later period, 1546–1582,

according to Thorold Rogers, some accounts of harvest work from Oxford show women paid the same as men.

In the sixteenth century the Statute of Apprentices, 5 Eliz. c. 4, gave power to justices to compel women between twelve years old and forty to be retained and serve by the year, week, or day, " for such wages and in such reasonable sort and manner as they shall think meet," and a woman who refused thus to serve might be imprisoned.

Textiles. Wool and Liñen.—No trace remains in history of the inventor of the loom, but no historical record remains of a time without some means of producing a texture by means of intertwining a loose thread across a fixed warp. Any such device, however rude, must involve a degree of culture much above mere savagery, and probably resulted from a long process of groping effort and invention. From this dim background hand-spinning and weaving emerge in tradition and history as the customary work of women, the type of their activity, and the norm of their duty and morals. The old Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and German words for loom are certainly very ancient, and Pictet derives the word *wife* from the occupation of weaving. In the Northern Mythology the three stars in the Belt of Orion were called Frigga Rock, or Frigga's Distaff, which in the days of Christianity was changed to Maria Rock, rock being an old word for distaff.

Spinning, weaving, dyeing, and embroidering were special features of Anglo-Saxon industry, and were entirely confined to women. King Alfred in his will distinguished between the spear-half and spindle-half of his family; and in an old illustration of the Scripture, Adam is shown receiving the spade and Eve the distaff, after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This

traditional distinction between the duties of the sexes was continued even to the grave, a spear or a spindle, according to sex, being often found buried with the dead in Anglo-Saxon tombs.

In the Church of East Meon, Hants, there is a curious old font with a sculptured representation of the same incident : Eve, it has been observed, stalks away with head erect, plying her spindle and distaff, while Adam, receiving a spade from the Angel, looks submissive and abased.

In an old play entitled *Corpus Christi*, formerly performed before the Grey or Franciscan Friars, Adam is made to say to Eve :

> And wyff, to spinne now must thou fynde
> Our naked bodyes in cloth to wynde.

The distaff or rock could on occasion serve the purpose of a weapon of offence or defence. In the *Digby Mysteries* a woman brandishes her distaff, exclaiming :

> What ! shall a woman with a Rocke drive thee away !

In the *Winter's Tale* Hermione exclaims :

> We'll thwack him thence with distaffs (Act I., Sc. ii.).

Spinning and weaving were in old times regarded as specially virtuous occupations. Deloney quotes an old song which brings out this idea with much *naïveté* :

> Had Helen then sat carding wool,
> Whose beauteous face did breed such strife,
> She had not been Sir Paris' trull
> Nor cause so many lose their life.
> Or had King Priam's wanton son
> Been making quills with sweet content

He had not then his friends undone
When he to Greece a-gadding went.
The cedar trees endure more storms
Than little shrubs that sprout on hie,
The weaver lives more void of harm
Than princes of great dignity.

There is also a little French poem quoted and translated by Wright, which runs thus :

Much ought woman to be held dear,
By her is everybody clothed.
Well know I that woman spins and manufactures
The cloths with which we dress and cover ourselves,
And gold tissues, and cloth of silk ;
And therefore say I, wherever I may be,
To all who shall hear this story,
That they say no ill of womankind.

Spinning and weaving, as ordinarily carried on in the mediaeval home, were, Mr. Andrews thinks, backward, wasteful, and comparatively unskilled in technique. It is uncertain exactly at what period the spinning-wheel came into existence—certainly before the sixteenth century, and it may be a good deal earlier ; but doubtless the use of the distaff lingered on in country places and among older-fashioned people long after the wheel was in use in the centres of the trades. Thus Aubrey speaks of nuns using wheels, and adds, " In the old time they used to spin with rocks ; in Somersetshire they use them still." Yet weaving among the Anglo-Saxons had been carried to a considerable degree of excellence in the cities and monasteries. Mr. Warden says that even before the end of the seventh century the art of weaving had attained remarkable perfection in England, and he quotes from a book by Bishop Aldhelm, written about 680, describing " webs woven with shuttles, filled with threads of

purple and many other colours, flying from side to side, and forming a variety of figures and images in different compartments with admirable art." These beautiful handiworks were executed by ladies of high rank and great piety, and were designed for ornaments to the churches or for vestments to the clergy. St. Theodore of Canterbury thought it necessary to forbid women to work on Sunday either in weaving or cleaning the vestments or sewing them, or in carding wool, or beating flax, or in washing garments, or in shearing the sheep, or in any such occupations.

Tapestry, cloth of gold, and other woven fabrics of great beauty and fineness, besides embroidery, were produced in convents, which in the Middle Ages were the chief centres of culture for women. So much was this the case indeed, that the spiritual advisers of the nuns at times became uneasy, and exhorted them to give more time to devotion and less to weaving and knitting "vainglorious garments of many colours." In that curious book of advice to nuns, the *Ancren Riwle*, composed in the twelfth century, the writer showed the same spirit, and opposed the making of purses and other articles of silk with ornamental work. He also dissuaded women from trafficking with the products of the conventual estates. These injunctions seem to indicate that women were showing some degree of mental and artistic activity and initiative. Royal ladies worked at spinning and weaving, and Piers Plowman tells the lovely ladies who asked him for work, to spin wool and flax, make cloth for the poor and naked, and teach their daughters to do the same.

It is evident from old accounts that a good deal of weaving was done outside by the piece for these great households, and of course spinning and weaving were

largely carried on in cottages as a bye-industry in conjunction with agriculture. Bücher gives a very interesting account of spinning as an opportunity for social intercourse among primitive peoples. In Thibet, he says, there is a spinning-room in each village; the young people, men and girls, meet and spin and smoke together. Spinning in groups or parties is known to have obtained also in Germany in olden times, and girls who now meet to make lace together in the same sociable way still say that they "go spinning." Spinning-rooms exist in Russia. In Yorkshire spinning seems to have been done socially in the open air, in fine weather, down to the eve of the industrial revolution.

Spinning was one of the first works in which young girls were instructed, and thus spinster has become the legal designation of an unmarried woman, not that she always gave up spinning at marriage, but because it was looked upon as the young unmarried woman's chief occupation. Old manuscripts also show women weaving at the loom, illustrations of which can be found in the interesting works of Thomas Wright.

In 1372 a Yorkshire woman spinner was summoned for taking "too much wages, contrary to the Statute of Artificers." In 1437 John Notyngham, a rich grocer of Bury St. Edmunds, bequeathed to one of his daughters a spinning-wheel and a pair of cards (cards or carpayanum, an implement which is stated in the *Promptorum Parvulorum* to be especially a woman's instrument). In 1418 Agnes Stebbard in the same town bequeathed to two of her maids a pair of wool-combs each, one combing-stick, one wheel, and one pair of cards. An illuminated MS. of the well-known French *Boccace des Nobles Femmes* has a most interesting illustration showing a queen and two maidens;

one maiden is spinning with a distaff, another combing wool, the queen sits at the loom weaving. Women often appear in old records as combers, carders, and spinners. Chaucer says rather cynically :

> Deceit, weeping, spinning God hath given
> To women kindly, whiles that they may liven.

And of the wife of Bath :

> Of clothmaking she had such an haunt
> She passed them of Ipres and of Gaunt.

The distaff lingered on for spinning flax. As late as 1757 an English poet writes :

> And many yet adhere
> To the ancient distaff at the bosom fixed,
> Casting the whirling spindle as they walk ;
> At home or in the sheep fold or the mart,
> Alike the work proceeds.

Walter of Henley says : " In March is time to sow flax and hemp, for I have heard old housewives say that better is March hards than April flax, the reason appeareth, but how it should be sown, weeded, pulled, repealed, watered, washen, dried, beaten, braked, tawed, heckled, spun, wound, wrapped and woven, it needeth not for me to show, for they be wise enough, and thereof may they make sheets, bordclothes (*sic*), towels, shirts, smocks, and such other necessaries, and therefore let thy distaff be always ready for a pastime, that thou be not idle. And undoubted a woman cannot get her living honestly with spinning on the distaff, but it stoppeth a gap and must needs be had." Further on, in reference to wool (probably spun by wheel ?), he draws the opposite conclusion : " It is convenient for a husband to have sheep of his own,

for many causes, and then may his wife have part of the wool, to make her husband and herself some clothes. . . . And if she have no wool of her own she may take wool to spin of cloth-makers, and by that means she may have a convenient living, an many times to do other works."

Irish women were noted for their skill in dressing hemp and flax and making linen and woollen cloth. Sir William Temple said, in 1681, that no women were apter to spin flax well than the Irish, who, " labouring little in any kind with their hands have their fingers more supple and soft than other women of poorer condition among us."

In the old Shuttleworth Accounts, reprinted by the Chetham Society, there are minute directions to the housewife on the management and manipulation of her wool. " It is the office of a husbandman at the shearing of the sheep to bestow upon the housewife such a competent proportion of wool as shall be convenient for the clothing of his family ; which wool, as soon as she hath received it, she shall open, and with a pair of shears cut away all the coarse locks, pitch, brands, tarred locks, and other feltrings, and lay them by themselves for coarse coverlets and the like. The rest she is to break in pieces and tease, lock by lock, with her hands open, and so divide the wool as not any part may be feltered or close together, but all open and loose. Then such of the wool as she intends to spin white she shall put by itself and the rest she shall weigh up and divide into several quantities, according to the proportion of the web she intends to make, and put every one of them into particular lays of netting, with tallies of wool fixed into them with privy marks thereon, for the weight, colour, and knowledge of the

wool, when the first colour is altered. Then she shall if she please send them to the dyer to be dyed after her own fancy," or dye them herself (recipes for which are given).

"After your wool is mixed, oiled and trimmed (carded), you shall then spin it upon great wool wheels, according to the order of good housewifery; the action whereof must be got by practice, and not by relation; only this you shall be carefull, to draw your thread according to nature and goodness of your wool, not according to your particular desire; for if you draw a fine thread from wool which is of a coarse staple, it will want substance . . . so, if you draw a coarse thread from fine wool, it will then be much overthick . . . to the disgrace of good housewifery and loss of much cloth."

Weaving and Spinning as a Woman's Trade.—The employments carried on by women in the household may have yielded money occasionally, as we have seen from some of the foregoing quotations, but the work appears in these excerpts to have been carried on rather as a bye-industry, as a means of utilising surplus produce, than as a recognised trade for gain or profit. Did women carry on the manufacture of woollen goods definitely as a craft or trade? The evidence on this head is not very clear. A statute of Edward III.[1] expressly exempts women from the ordinance, then in force, that men should not follow more than one craft. "It is ordained that Artificers Handicraft people hold them every one to one Mystery, which he will choose between this and the said feast of Candlemas; and Two of every craft shall be chosen

[1] 37 Edw. III. c. 6, quoted in Cunningham's *Growth of Industry and Commerce*, I. 353 *n.* (5th ed.).

to survey, that none use other craft than the same which he hath chosen. . . . But the intent of the King and of his Council is, that Women, that is to say, Brewers, Bakers, Carders and Spinners, and Workers as well of Wool as of Linen Cloth and of Silk, Brawdesters and Breakers of Wool and all other that do use and work all Handy Works may freely use and work as they have done before this time, without any impeachment or being restrained by this Ordinance." The meaning of this ordinance is rather obscure, but the greater liberty conferred on women would seem to imply that they were not carrying on the trades mentioned as organised workers competing with men, but that they performed the various useful works mentioned at odd times, incidentally to the work of the household. Miss Abram says women were sometimes cloth-makers (see 4 Edw. IV. c. 1), and often women cloth-makers, combers, carders, and spinners are mentioned in the Parliamentary Rolls. There were women amongst the tailors of Salisbury, and amongst the yeoman tailors of London, also among the dyers of Bristol and the drapers of London. Women might join the Merchant Gild of Totnes, and some belonged to the Gild Merchant of Lyons.

There appear to have been women members of the Weavers' Company of London in Henry VIII.'s time. Again at Bristol, in documents dating from the fourteenth century, we find mention of the " brethren and sistern " of the Weavers' Gild.

In the next century, in the first year of Edward IV., complaint was, however, made that many able-bodied weavers were out of work, in consequence of the employment of women at the weaver's craft, both at home and hired out. It was ordered that hence-

forward any one setting, putting, or hiring his wife, daughter, or maid " to such occupation of weaving in the loom with himself or with any other person of the said craft, within the said town of Bristol " should upon proof be fined 6s. 8d., half to go to the Chamber of Bristol and half to the Craft. This regulation was not, however, to apply to any weaver's wife so employed at the time it was made, but the said woman might continue to work at the loom as before.

Professor Unwin quotes a rule of the Clothworkers of London, in the second year of Edward VI., imposing a fine of 20 pence on any member employing even his own wife and daughter in his shop. At Hull, in 1490, women were forbidden working at the weaver's trade. But in 1564 the proviso was introduced that a widow might work at her husband's trade so long as she continued a widow and observed the orders of the company. The London Weavers clearly recognised women members, for they enacted that " no man or woman of the said craft shall entice any man's servant from him." But another rule prohibited taking a woman as apprentice. The statutes of the Weavers of Edinburgh in the sixteenth century provided that no woman be allowed to have looms of her own, *unless* she be a freeman's wife. Probably it was felt in practice to be impossible to prevent a woman helping her husband, or carrying on his trade after his death, although there was evidently a desire to keep women out of the craft as much as possible. By the seventeenth century Gervase Markham writes as if women did no weaving at all. " Now after your cloth is thus warped and delivered up into the hands of the Weaver, the Housewife hath finished her labour, for in the weaving, walking, and dressing thereof she can challenge

no property more than to entreat them severally to discharge their duties with a good conscience." At Norwich, in 1511, the Ordinance of Weavers forbade women to weave worsted, "for that they be not of sufficient power to work the same worsteds as they ought to be wrought."

Records of rates of pay to journeymen weavers, tuckers, fullers, etc., 1651,[1] ignore women as textile workers altogether; the only women mentioned in this assessment are agricultural workers and domestic servants. Nevertheless, old accounts of the seventeenth century do show payments to women, not only for spinning, but for weaving and "walking" woollen cloth, and we can only conclude that while the progress of technical improvements had made weaving largely a men's trade, it was yet also carried on by women to a considerable extent.

Apprenticeship.—It seems appropriate here to give some little space to the subject of apprenticeship. Miss Dunlop points out, in her recent valuable work on that subject, that the opposition of some of the gilds to women's work was not hostility to women as women, so much as distrust of the untrained, unqualified worker. "At Salisbury the barber-surgeons agitated against unskilled women who medelled in the trade." "In the Girdlers' Company the officers forbade their members to employ foreigners and maids, not out of any animosity to the women, but because unscrupulous workmen had been underselling their fellows by employing cheap labour." At Hull, as we have seen, the employment of women was forbidden, but so was the employment of aliens. According to Miss Dunlop,

[1] See a volume of tracts at the British Museum numbered 1851, c. 10.

the great difficulty in the way of women was the onerousness of domestic work, which prevented girls undertaking apprenticeship to a skilled craft. It appears that women and girls were largely employed as assistants to the husband or father, and that the requirement of apprenticeship by the Elizabethan Statute did not check the practice, as it was so widespread and so convenient that the law was difficult to enforce. It is exceptional, Miss Dunlop remarks, to find a gild forbidding the practice, and in point of fact, the services of his wife and daughter were usually the only cheap casual labour a man could get. Apprentice labour was cheap, but could not be obtained for short periods at a sudden pressure. "Girl labour, therefore, had a peculiar value, and we may suppose that more girls worked at crafts and manufactures than would have been the case if they had been obliged to serve an apprenticeship." There was no systematic training and technical teaching of girls as there was of boys, though in some cases they were apprenticed and served their time, and in others, though unapprenticed, they may have been as carefully taught. "But apprenticeship played no part in the life of girls as a whole: they missed the general education which it afforded, and their training tended to be casual and irregular": on the other hand, their lives gained something in variety from the change of passing from household to industrial work and *vice versa*. The system must, however, have tended to keep women in an inferior and subordinate position. "For although they worked hard and the total amount of their labour has contributed largely to our industrial development, it was only exceptionally that they attained to the standing of employers and industrial leaders." The

exceptions are rather interesting; it is evident that London was broad-minded in its delimitation of the woman's sphere of activity and there were many instances of girls being apprenticed.

There were also women who, though unapprenticed, had the right of working on their own account, and this, though never very common, was not so unusual as to arouse comment or surprise. These were mostly widows who carried on the work of their deceased husbands; others were the daughters of freemen who claimed as such to be admitted to the gild or company, basing their claims on rights of patrimony. This taking up of independent work by no means implied that the women had themselves served apprenticeship in youth; it seems merely to have meant the inheritance of the goodwill and privileges along with the craftsman's shop. In the Carpenters' Company Mary Wiltshire and Ann Callcutt took up their freedom by right of patrimony, and there are other instances.

The Development of Capitalistic Industry.—The growth and development of a capitalistic system of industry can be traced from the fifteenth century, and forms one of the most interesting and dramatic episodes in economic history. It is, however, not very easy to determine in what way the change influenced women's employment. The more prosperous among the weavers gradually developed into clothiers, employing many hands, but the majority tended to become mere wage-earners. A petition of weavers in 1539 stated that the clothiers had their own looms and weavers and fullers in their own houses, so that the master weavers were rendered destitute. "For the rich men the clothiers be concluded and agreed among themselves to hold and pay one price for weaving, which price is

too little to sustain households upon, working night and day, holy-day and work-day, and many weavers are therefore reduced to the position of servants." The Petition of Suffolk Clothiers, 1575, says that the custom of their country is "to carry our wool out . . . and put it to sundry spinners who have in their houses divers and sundry children and servants that do card and spin the same wool." In the north of England also large clothiers employing many hands were to be found as early as 1520. The subsequent development of the industry, Professor Unwin tells us, took place in a very marked degree in those districts which were exempt from the operation of the statutes forbidding clothiers to set up outside market-towns. In other parts of the country the struggle was acute. "The protection of industry from all competition was the first and last word of the crafts. To employers and dealers the monopoly of trade chiefly meant their own monopoly of production and sale, while the wage-earner's predominant anxiety was to keep surplus labour out of the craft, lest the regular worker might be deprived of his comfortable certainty of subsistence."

There was, however, a great expansion of trade and industry going on, and labour was needed. The master who had accumulated a little capital perhaps moved out to the valleys of Yorkshire or Gloucestershire in search of water-power for his fulling mills or finer wool for his weavers, or forsook the manufacturing town for some rural district where labour was plentiful and he could escape the heavy municipal dues which his business could ill afford to pay. The ordinances of Worcester, for instance, contain regulations intended to prevent the masters giving out wool to the weavers in other parts so long as there were

people enough in the city to do the work, "in the hindering of the poor commonalty of the same."

The struggle between these two forms of industry, the craft carried on in the towns and the dispersed industry under a more definitely capitalistic organisation in the country, went on for centuries. From the earliest years of the reign of Henry VIII. to the accession of Elizabeth, a constantly increasing amount of legislation was devoted to the protection of the town manufacture against the competition of the country. This legislation was interpreted by Froude as a genuine endeavour to protect a highly skilled, highly organised industry of independent craftsmen against the evils of capitalism, but the closer researches of Professor Unwin show that this is idealism ; the craftsmen were merely pawns in the hands of town merchants who dreaded to see some of the trade pass into the hands of a new class of country capitalists. This is an historical controversy too difficult to follow closely here ; what we have to note is the part played by women in the change.

We may as well admit that women's work during this industrial transition appears mostly as part of the problem of cheap unorganised labour. "The spinners seem never to have had any organisation, and were liable to oppression by their employers, not only through low wages, but through payment in kind, and the exaction of arbitrary fines." Irregularity of employment was another trouble : in the play of *King Henry VIII.* the clothiers were shown making increased taxation a pretext for dismissing hands.

> The clothiers all, not able to maintain
> The many to them 'longing, have put off
> The spinsters, carders, fullers, weavers.

To compensate their masters' greed and extortion they had recourse to petty dishonesties on their own part, and were frequently accused of keeping back part of the wool given out, or of making up the weight by the addition of oil or other moisture to the yarn. In 1593 a Bill was presented to Parliament which imposed penalties on frauds in spinning and weaving, but also pointed out that the workers were partly driven to fraud "for lack of sufficient wages and allowance," and proposed to raise the wages of spinners and weavers by one-third.[1] This Bill (which may be regarded as a kind of ancestor of Mr. Winston Churchill's Trade Boards Act, 1909) failed to pass.

In the seventeenth century the rates of spinners' wages appear very low, even measured by contemporary standards. Mr. Hamilton has reproduced the wages assessed at Quarter Sessions by the Justices of Exeter in 1654. Weavers were to have 2½d. a day with food or 8d. without. It is difficult to guess whether these weavers were supposed to be men or women; the rates fixed are less than those for husbandry labourers (which were fixed at 3d. and 10d.), but rather more than those for women haymakers, which were 2d. and 6d. Spinsters, however, were to have "not above" 6d. a week with food or 1s. 4d. without. In 1713 at the same place spinsters were to have not above 1s. a week, or 2s. 6d. if without board, which again compares very unfavourably with the other rates mentioned. It is difficult to understand the extreme lowness of these rates of pay to spinsters, unless on the assumption that they were intended to apply to servants actually living and working in the clothiers' houses; or that

[1] S.P. Dom. Eliz. 1593, vol. 244. Reprinted in *English Economic History*, Bland, Brown and Tanney, p. 336.

spinning was supposed not to occupy a woman's whole time, which no doubt was often the case. But the rates fixed on that assumption should of course have been piece rates. Altogether Mr. Hamilton's research here raises more questions than it can settle.

No doubt the Poor Law helped in some degree to depress wages, for another form taken by this many-sided industry of wool was that of relief work under the Poor Law. Spinning was the main resource of those whose duty under the Poor Law was to find work for the unemployed, and in institutions such as Christ's Hospital, Ipswich, children were set to card and spin from their earliest years. Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely. A charitable workhouse in Bishopsgate used to give out wool and flax every Monday morning to be spun at home to "such poor people as desire it and are skilful in spinning thereof." [1] Nevertheless we do occasionally get glimpses of women as an important factor in industry. For instance, in Edward VI.'s time, there had been an attempt to require clothiers to be apprenticed. This law was repealed in the first year of Queen Mary, with the remark that "the perfect and principal ground of cloth making is the true sorting of wools, and the experience thereof consisteth only in women, as clothiers' wives and their women servants and not in apprentices."

A still more remarkable development of female employment, perhaps, was the beginning of the factory system in the sixteenth century. These were chiefly in the west of England industry, and in Wiltshire. Leland in his *Itinerary* mentions a man called Stumpe who had actually taken possession of the ancient Abbey

[1] Cf. a report of a workhouse in 1701 (catalogued as 816. m. 15. 48 in the Brit. Mus. Library), where ten poor women were employed to teach the children to spin.

of Malmesbury and filled it with looms, employing many hands. A still more celebrated instance was the factory of John Winchcomb, a prudent man who married his master's widow and had a fine business at Newbury, described in a ballad which shows him employing 200 men weaving, each with a boy helper, and 100 women carding wool:

> And in a chamber close beside
> Two hundred maydens did abide
> In petticoats of stammel red
> And milk-white kerchiefs on their head.
> . . . . . .
> These pretty maids did never lin
> But in that place all day did spin.

In 1567 the Weaver's Gild of Bristol prohibited its members from underselling one another in the prices of their work, and also forbade them to allow their wives to go for any work to clothiers' houses, which at least implies that there was some demand for their labour. Now, although the growth of capital may have seriously affected the position of the male craftsmen, as Professor Unwin tells us, and reduced them to be mere wage-earners, it seems not impossible that the economic position of women may have been improved by the opportunity of work for wages outside the home. Women had worked for the use and consumption of their own households, and, as wives of craftsmen, they had worked as helpers with their husbands. The new organisation of work by a capitalist employer opened up the possibility to women and girls of earning wages for themselves. The additional earnings of wife and children even if very small make a great difference in the comfort of a labourer's family. It is likely enough, indeed it is evident that their work was often

grievously exploited, and the reduction of the craftsman to the position of a mere wage-earner may have diminished the spending power of the family. Of all this we know little or nothing definitely, but it seems probable that the supersession of handicraft by a quasi-capitalistic form of organisation affected women less adversely than men. In the eighteenth century, the palmy days of the domestic system, some women in the industrial centres were earning what were considered very good wages. Arthur Young says of the cloth trade round Leeds: "Some women earn by weaving as much as the men." Of Norwich he says: "The earnings of manufacturers (*i.e.* hand-workers) are various, but in general high," the men on an average earning 5s. a week, and many women earning as much.[1]

It must be also remembered that each weaver kept several spinners employed, so that unless his family could supply him, he might easily be forced to have recourse to the services of women workers outside. Mr. Townsend Warner quotes an estimate that 25 weavers might require the services of 250 spinners to keep them fully supplied with yarn.

Mantoux thinks this excessive, though it has to be remembered, as Mr. Townsend Warner points out, that the spinners usually did not give their whole time. Again, the description of the organisation of the trade, end of eighteenth century, quoted by Bonwick, conveys the impression that women, in some cases at all events, were taking a responsible part.

I went to York, to buy wool, and at that time it averaged

[1] *Tour in East of England*, vol. ii. pp. 75, 81. I am indebted to Mrs. C. M. Wilson for drawing my attention to these passages and for suggesting the remarks immediately following.

about 1s. per pound. I then came home, sorted and combed it myself. After being combed, it was oiled and closed, that is, the long end of the wool and the short end were put together to form a skein. It took a number of skeins to make a top, each top making exactly a pound. Then I took it to hand-spinners 20 or 30 miles distant. The mother or head of the family plucked the tops into pieces the length of the wool, and gave it to the different branches of the family to spin, who could spin about 9 or 10 hanks per day; for the spinning I gave one half penny per hank, and sometimes ½d. for every 24 hanks over.

Another interesting account is given by Bamford:

Farms were most cultivated for the production of milk, butter and cheese. . . . The farming was mostly of that kind which was soonest and most easily performed, and it was done by the husband and other males of the family, whilst the wife and daughters and maid servants, if there were any of the latter, attended to the churning, cheese-making, and household work, and when that was finished, they busied themselves in carding, slubbing, and spinning of wool and cotton, as well as forming it into warps for the loom. The husband and sons would next, at times when farm labour did not call them abroad, size the warp, dry it, and beam it in the loom, and either they or the females, whichever happened to be least otherwise employed, would weave the warp down. A farmer would generally have 3 or 4 looms in his house.

Of course it is not to be inferred that the women thus employed were always free to control or spend their own earnings; in law they undoubtedly were not, if married. The domestic system so picturesquely described by Defoe (in his *Tour*), under which the family worked together, each, from the oldest to the youngest, doing his or her part, no doubt often involved a quite patriarchal distribution and control of the resulting

earnings. Still the mention of women as separate and individual earners that occurs often in eighteenth-century works on the subject must indicate that they were attaining a greater measure of individual recognition and self-determination than formerly.[1]

It is interesting also to notice that the cloth industry was sometimes carried on socially in the eighteenth century. Bradford Dale was covered with weavers and spinners, and the women and children of Allerton, Thornton, and other villages in the valley, used to flock on sunny days with their spinning wheels to some favourite pleasant spot, and work in company.[2]

Frame-Work Knitting.—The frame-work knitting trade has many points of resemblance with the woollen weaving trade. Hand-knitting, we are told by Felkin, was not introduced till the sixteenth century. It became extremely popular and was pursued by women in every class of life from the palace to the cottage. A kind of frame or hand-machine was invented in the seventeenth century by Lee. It is said that Lee invented this machine in a spirit of revenge and bitterness against a young lady he had fallen in love with, who was so intent on her knitting that she could never give him her attention when he made love to her. From watching her at work he acquired a mastery of the mesh or stitch, and anger at her being so engrossed with her

[1] Defoe in his *Plan of English Commerce* says that after the great plague in France and the peace in Spain the run for goods was so great in England, and the prices so high that poor women in Essex could earn 1s. or 1s. 6d. a day by spinning, and the farmers could hardly get dairymaids. This was, however, only for a time; demand slackened, and the spinners were reduced to misery.

[2] James, *History of Worsted*, p. 289. This pleasant custom may remind us of lines in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, i. 4:

> "The spinsters and the knitters in the sun
> And the free maids that weave their thread with bones."

employment impelled him to make a machine that would deprive her of her work.

The frame-work knitters were incorporated under Charles II., and the company made rather drastic rules, trying to exclude women from apprenticeship, though they might become members on widowhood, as in so many of the old guilds. Frame-work knitting also gave employment to women and children in seaming up the hose. In the eighteenth century the trade became sweated and underpaid. The hours of work were as much as fifteen a day. Women, however, were paid at the same rates per piece, and were subject to the same deductions, and some of them were good hands and could earn as much as men.

Silk.—The broad difference between linen and woollen on the one hand, and silk and cotton on the other, is that the two former, so ancient that their origins are lost to history, arose as household industries at the very early stage of civilisation in which the family is self-sufficient, or nearly so, providing for its own needs and consumption by the work of its own members; the two latter, on the contrary, appear chiefly as trades carried on not for use but for payment, and are also sharply differentiated from the more ancient industries by the fact that the raw materials—silk and cotton—are not indigenous to these islands, but have to be imported.

In the manufacture of silk, women early appear as independent producers and manufacturers, for in the fifteenth century they were sufficiently organised to be able collectively to petition Parliament for measures to check the importation of ribbons and wrought silk, and on their behalf was passed an Act (1455) 33 Hen. VI. c. 5, which states that "it is shewed . . . by the

grievous complaint of the silk women and spinners of the mystery and occupation of silk-working, within the city of London, how that divers Lombards and other strangers, imagining to destroy the said mystery and all such virtuous occupations of women in the said realm, to enrich themselves and to increase them and such occupations in other strange lands, have brought and daily go about to bring into the said realm such silk so made, wrought, twined, ribbands and chains falsely and deceitfully wrought, all manner girdels and other things concerning the said mystery and occupation, in no manner wise bringing any good silk unwrought, as they were wont to bring heretofore, to the final destruction of the said mysteries and occupations, unless it be the more hastily remedied by the King's Majesty." The importation of silk, ribbons, etc., was forthwith prohibited, and we find similar prohibitions in 3 Edw. IV. c. 3 and c. 4, 22 Edw. IV. c. 3, 1 Rich. III. c. 10, and 1 Hen. VII. c. 9. Henry VII. dealt with several silk women for ribands, fringes, and so forth, as recorded in his accounts. A statute of Charles II. 14 Ch. II. c. 15 says many women in London were employed in working silk.

The manufacture of silk was introduced into Derbyshire at the beginning of the eighteenth century. John Lombe's silk mill was the first textile mill at work in that county. A rather considerable manufacture of piece silks and silk ribbons and braid grew up in Derby and Glossop, a large proportion of women and girls being employed. The numbers of operatives in this industry increased up to the census of 1851 and 1861, when about 6000 operatives were employed, after which it began to go down, reaching the low figure of 662 in the county in 1901; in 1911, 442.

In Macclesfield silk-throwing mills were erected in 1756, the manufacture of silk goods and mohair buttons having been already carried on for centuries. The silk throwsters of Macclesfield for many years worked for Spitalfields and supplied them with thrown silk through the London manufacturers. In 1776, it is recorded, the wages paid to the millmen and stewards were 7s. a week, the women doublers 3s. 6d., children 6d. to 1s. The manufacture of broad silk was established at Macclesfield in 1790. We know by inference that many women must have been employed, but information is unfortunately scanty in regard to the social conditions of this trade, so specially adapted to industrial women. It is evident, however, that women kept their place in it, for the apprenticeship rules laid before the Committee on Ribbon Weavers in 1818 expressly included women, both as apprentices and journeywomen.

The inherent delicacy of many of the processes, and the fact that silk as a luxury trade is especially susceptible to changes of fashion, have retarded the use of machinery and preserved the finer fabrics as an artistic handicraft. But this, in itself a development to be welcomed, must also indicate that capital and labour can be more advantageously employed in the industries that have evolved more fully on modern lines, for the silk trade is undoubtedly declining in England.

Other Industries.—If information respecting the traditional employments of women in the linen and woollen trades is sparse and unsatisfactory, much more is it difficult to trace out their conditions in other industries of a less "womanly" character. Yet even in such callings it is sufficiently evident that women

were employed. Traill's *Social England* tells us of women making ropes as early as the thirteenth century. Women are known to have worked in the Derbyshire lead mines, *temp.* Edward II. They washed and cleaned the ore at a 1d. a day, and were assisted by four girls at ¾d. a day, men being employed at the same time at 1½d. a day. Mr. Lapsley, in his account of a fifteenth-century ironworks, records that two women, wives of the smith and foreman respectively, performed miscellaneous tasks, from breaking up the iron-stone to blowing the bellows. In 1652 a Parliamentary commission found that many of the surface workers employed in dressing the ore (*i.e.* freeing it from the earth and spar with which it was mixed) were women and children. An *Account of Mines*, dated 1707, tells us that vast numbers of poor people at that time were employed in " working of mines, the very women and children employed therein, as well as the men, especially in the mines of lead." Women worked in coal-mining at Winterton, " for lack of men," in 1581, and with children were employed in the " great coal-works and workhouses " started by Sir Humphrey Mackworth at Neath. They evidently worked underground, as several deaths of women in mine explosions are recorded. In 1770 Arthur Young found women working in lead mines and earning as much as 1s. a day, a man earning 1s. 3d.

In Birmingham trades, especially the making of buttons and other small articles, women were employed as far back as we can find any records. At Burslem, Young found women working in the potteries, earning 5s. to 8s. a week. Near Bristol he found women and girls employed in a copper works for melting copper ore, and making the metal into pins, pans, etc. At

Gloucester he found great numbers of women working in the pin manufacture. In the Sheffield plated ware trade he found girls working, but does not mention women. Of the Sheffield trades generally he says that women and girls earn very good wages, " much more than by spinning wool in any part of the kingdom."

It is unfortunate that we have, so far, very little information in regard to women's work in non-textile trades previous to the industrial revolution. It is tolerably safe to infer that the above scattered hints indicate a state of things neither new nor exceptional. There can be little doubt that women constantly worked in these trades, either assisting the head of the family, or as a wage-worker for an outside employer. But we know so little that we cannot attempt to enlarge on the subject.

CHAPTER II.

WOMEN AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.

He ! an die Arbeit !
Alle von hinnen !
Hurtig hinab !
Aus den neuen Schachten
schafft mir das Gold !
Euch grüsst die Geissel,
grabt ihr nicht rasch !
Das keiner mir müssig
bürge mir Mime,
sonst birgt er sich schwer
meines Armes Schwunge :
. . . .
Zögert ihr noch ?
Zaudert wohl gar ?
Zittre und zage,
gezähmtes Heer !

WAGNER, *Das Rheingold.*

THE cotton trade is the industry most conspicuously identified with the series of complex changes that we call the Industrial Revolution. Its history before that period is comparatively unimportant ; we have therefore left it over from the previous chapter to the present.

Cottons are mentioned as a Manchester trade in the sixteenth century, but it seems probable that these

were really a coarse kind of woollen stuff, and not cotton at all. Cotton wool had, it is true, been imported from the East for some time, but was used only for candle wicks and such small articles, not for cloth. In the Poor Law of Elizabeth, cotton is not included among the articles that might be provided by overseers to " set the poor on work." The first authoritative mention of the cotton manufacture of Manchester occurs in Lewis Roberts' *Treasure of Traffike.* It appears from this tract, which was published in 1641, that the Levant Company used to bring cotton wool to London, which was afterwards taken to Manchester and worked up into " fustians, vermilions, dimities, and other such stuffs." The manufacture had therefore become an established fact by the middle of the seventeenth century, but its growth was not rapid for some time. Owing to the rudeness of the spinning implements used fine yarn could not be spun and fine goods could not be woven. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, however, Manchester and the cotton manufacture began to increase very markedly in size and activity, and the resulting demand for yarn served to stimulate the invention of machinery. " The weaver was continually pressing upon the spinner. The processes of spinning and weaving were generally performed in the same cottage, but the weaver's own family could not supply him with a sufficient quantity of weft, and he had with much pains to collect it from neighbouring spinsters. Thus his time was wasted, and he was often subjected to high demands for an article on which, as the demand exceeded the supply, the spinner could put her own price." Guest says it was no uncommon thing for a weaver to walk three or four miles in a morning, and call on five or six spinners,

before he could collect weft to serve him for the remainder of the day, and when he wished to weave a piece in a shorter time than usual, a new ribbon or a gown was necessary to quicken the exertions of the spinner. The difficulty was intensified in 1738 by Kay's invention of the fly-shuttle, which enabled the weaver to do twice as much work with a given effort, and consequently of course to use up yarn in a similar proportion. John Hargreaves, a Blackburn weaver, contrived a spinning machine which multiplied eightfold the productive power of one spinner, and was, moreover, simple enough to be worked by a child. Subsequent developments and improvements were effected by Paul Wyatt and Arkwright, and the latter being a good business man, unlike some other inventors, made money out of his ideas.

The changes effected in rural social life by the industrial revolution are excellently described by W. Radcliffe. In the year 1770, when Radcliffe was a boy nine or ten years old, his native township of Mellor, in Derbyshire, only fourteen miles from Manchester, was occupied by between fifty and sixty farmers ; rents did not usually exceed 10s. per statute acre, and of these fifty or sixty farmers, there were only six or seven who paid their rents directly from the produce of their land ; all the rest made it partly in some branch of trade, such as spinning and weaving woollen, linen, or cotton. The cottagers were employed entirely in this manner, except at harvest time. The father would earn 8s. to 10s. 6d. at his loom, and his sons perhaps 6s. or 8s. each per week ; but the " great sheet-anchor of all cottages and small farms," according to Radcliffe, was the profit on labour at the hand-wheel. It took six to eight hands to prepare and

spin yarn sufficient to keep one weaver occupied, and a demand was thus created for the labour of every person, from young children to the aged, supposing they could see and move their hands. The better class of cottagers and even small farmers also used spinning to make up their rents and help support their families respectably.

From the year 1770 to 1788 a complete change was effected in the textile trade, cotton being largely used in substitution for wool and linen. The hand-wheels were mostly thrown into lumber-rooms, and the yarn was all spun on common jennies. In weaving no great change took place in these eighteen years, save the increasing use of the fly-shuttle and the change from woollen and linen to cotton. But the mule twist was introduced about 1788, and the enormous variety of new yarns now in vogue, for the production of every kind of clothing—from the finest book-muslin or lace to the heaviest fustian—added to the demand for weaving, and put all hands in request. The old loom shops being insufficient, every lumber-room, even old barns, cart-houses, and out-buildings of every description were repaired, windows having been broken through the old blank walls, and all were fitted up for weaving. New weavers' cottages with loom-shops also rose up in every direction, and were immediately occupied. It is said that families at this period used to bring home 40s., 60s., 80s., 100s., or even 120s. a week. The operative weavers were in a condition of prosperity never before experienced by them. Every man had a watch in his pocket, women could dress as they pleased, and as Radcliffe records, "the church was crowded to excess every Sunday." Handsome furniture, china, and plated ware, were acquired by these

well-to-do families, and many had a cow and a meadow.

This prosperity was, however, ephemeral in duration. With the increased complexity and elaboration of machinery, a change came. The profitableness of the trade brought in larger capital, and led to the erection of mills, with water power as the motive force. In such buildings as these machinery could be set up, and labour could be drilled, organised and subdivided, so as to produce a far greater return on the invested capital than in the weavers' shops. These mills were built in places at some distance from towns, and often in valleys and glens for the sake of water-power ; they were, however, kept as near towns as possible for the sake of markets and means of transport. The first mills were exclusively devoted to carding and spinning. The gradual increase of this system soon influenced the prosperity of the domestic manufacturer—his profits quickly fell, workmen being readily found to superintend the mill labour at a rate of wages, high, it is true, but yet comparatively much lower than the recently inflated value of home labour. The introduction of steam-power considerably hastened the evolution of the factory industry.

The power-loom was invented, or rather its invention was initiated, or suggested, not by a manufacturer, or even by any one conversant with textile work, but by a Kentish clergyman, named Cartwright. He heard of Arkwright's spinning machinery in 1784 from some Manchester men whom he met, apparently quite by chance, at Matlock. One of these remarked that the machines which had just been perfected would produce so much cotton that no hands could ever be found to weave it. Cartwright replied that in that case

Arkwright must invent a weaving mill. The Manchester men all declared this to be impossible, and gave Cartwright all sorts of technical reasons for their belief. He, however, went home and rapidly thought out a rude contrivance which he employed a carpenter and smith to make under his orders, got a weaver to put in a warp, and found that the thing worked, though in a rough and unwieldy manner. Unfortunately, like so many inventors, he had little or no business ability. His first factory was a failure. He made a second attempt, in 1791, and erected considerable buildings. By this time the weavers were already up in arms. Cartwright received threatening letters, and the factory was burnt. Nevertheless, the change was progressing, and where one failed, others were destined to succeed. Several weaving factories were started in Scotland, at the end of the century, and in 1803 Horrocks put up some iron automatic looms at Stockport, which were soon copied in other towns of Lancashire. The power-loom, however, was still imperfect in detail, and did not come into general use until about 1833. The downfall of prices in weaving, which for the workers concerned was as tragic as it was astonishing, can be seen in a table in "Social and Economic History," *Victoria County History, Lancashire*, vol. ii. p. 327. Miss Alice Law gives the prices for the whole series of years 1814–1833; as the work is fairly accessible I reproduce only samples, which show the trend sufficiently well.

[TABLE.

PRICES FOR WEAVING ONE PIECE OF SECOND OR THIRD 74 CALICO.

	1814.	1820.	1821.	1833.
	s. *d.*	*s.* *d.*	*s.* *d.*	*s.* *d.*
Average price per piece .	6 6	2 11	3 2	1 4
Average weekly sum a good weaver could earn	26 0	11 8	12 7	5 4
Sum a family of 6, 3 being weavers, could earn .	52 0	23 4	28 $3\frac{3}{4}$	12 0
Indispensable weekly expenses for repair of looms, fuel, light .	5 3	5 3	5 3	4 3
Sum remaining to six persons for food and clothing per week .	46 9	18 1	23 $0\frac{3}{4}$	7 9

Subjected to the competition of power-looms, the hand-weavers were compelled either to desert their employment and seek factory work, as in fact the younger, more capable and energetic of them actually did, or to reduce their rates of pay, which in time reached the point of starvation.

It is extremely difficult to find much definite information as to the condition of industrial women in this period. The technical changes, commercial and political controversies, the startling growth of wealth, and the conflicts of labour and capital that made up the more striking and dramatic side of the industrial revolution have naturally impressed the imagination of historians. Little attention has been given to the state of women at this time. It is by inference from known facts rather than by actual documentary

evidence that we can arrive at an estimate of the effects on women of these extraordinary changes. A certain proportion of women, no doubt a very small one, must certainly have arrived at wealth and prosperity through the rapid accession of fortune achieved by some of the weavers and yeomen farmers, who became employers on a large scale. This is scarcely the place to treat of this subject, though it is by no means destitute of interest.[1] There were, further, women who distinctly benefited by the improved wages of men in certain industries, when the spending power of the family was increased by the new methods. This was the case temporarily in the weaving trade during the period of expansion through cheaper yarn noted above; Dr. Cunningham says that "the improved rates for weaving rendered the women and children independent, and unwilling to 'rival a wooden jenny.'"[2] Baines also tells us at a later date, that where a spinner is assisted by his own children in the mill, "his income is so large that he can live more generously, clothe himself and his family better than many of the lower class of tradesmen, and though improvidence and misconduct too often ruin the happiness of these families, yet there are thousands of spinners in the cotton districts who eat meat every day, wear broad cloth on the Sunday, dress their wives and children well, furnish their houses with mahogany and carpets,

[1] Philip Gaskell, who was, however, so prejudiced against the factory system that his views must be taken with caution, says that the wives of manufacturers who had risen from poverty to affluence were "an epitome of everything that is odious in manners," their only redeeming point being a profuse hospitality, which however, Grant attributes to "a sense of vain-glory."—*Manufacturing Population*, p. 60.

[2] *Growth of English Industry and Commerce, Modern Times*, p. 654 (ed. 1907).

subscribe to publications, and pass through life with much of humble respectability." [1]

The effects of the industrial revolution on women other than the two classes just indicated are more complicated. In the first place, the rural labouring class suffered considerably from the loss of by-industries, which in some districts had been a great help in eking out the wages of the head of the family.

Decay of Hand-Spinning.—In regard to this subject the facts are fairly well known. Towards the end of the eighteenth century spinning ceased to be remunerative, even as a by-industry. As the work became more specialised, as the machines came more and more into use, it became more and more difficult for a mere home industry to compete with work done under capitalistic conditions. Numbers of families, previously independent, became unable to support themselves without help from the rates. Sir Frederick Eden gives some concrete cases. At Halifax he notes that " many poor women who earned a bare subsistence by spinning, are now in a very wretched condition." He ascribes this to the influence of the war in reducing the price of weaving and spinning, but no doubt the competition of the machine industry was already an important factor. At Leeds, where the new methods had been largely introduced, the workers were better off. In another place he gives some instances of workers at Kendal where the earnings of a whole family, the father weaving and the wife and elder children weaving, spinning, or knitting, were insufficient to maintain them without the aid of the Poor Law. In an article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (May 1834, p. 531), the

[1] *History of Cotton Manufacture*, p. 446.

writer remarks, as if noticing a new phenomenon, that the families of labourers are now dependent on the men's labours or nearly so ; and adds rather brutally " they [the families] hang as a dead weight upon the rates for want of employment."

The loss of these by-industries as a supplementary source of income was no doubt one of several causes that impelled the drift of labour from the country to the town. It is also worth noting that the women lost, not only their earnings, but something in variety of work and in manual training.

The Hand-Loom Weaver's Wife.—More miserable still was the fate of those hand-weavers who found the piece-rates of their work constantly sagging downwards, and were unable or unwilling to find another trade. It appears that there was a kind of reciprocal movement going on between the spinners and weavers during the transition, which is of interest as illustrating the kind of skill and intelligence that was required. The weavers, who had been enjoying a period of such unusual prosperity and might be expected therefore to have more knowledge of the progress of trade and to be possessed at least of some small capital, not infrequently abandoned the loom, purchased machinery for spinning, and gradually rose more and more into the position of an employer or trader rather than a mere craftsman.

On the other hand, the spinner of the poorer sort, being unable to keep pace with the growing expense of the improved and ever more elaborate machinery, not infrequently threw aside the wheel and took to weaving, as the easier solution of the immediate problem of subsistence for a hand-worker who had neither capital nor business ability to enable him to succeed

in the new conditions of the struggle. Thus the ranks of the hand-weavers tended to be swollen by the failures of other industries and depleted of the most capable men, and as Mantoux notes, "the fall in weavers' wages actually preceded the introduction of machinery for weaving."

From 1793 the reduction of weavers' rates was constant. The weaving of a piece of velvet, paid at £4 in 1792, brought the worker only £2 : 15s. in 1794, £2 in 1796, £1 : 16s. in 1800. At the same time the quantity in a piece was increased. This violent depreciation of hand-work was caused at first by surplus labour, and was subsequently aggravated by machinism. The workers who were most capable cast in their lot with the new system and the new methods. But the misery of the slower, older, less energetic worker was terrible.

In the Coventry ribbon trade wages were lowered by the employment of young people as half-pay apprentices, who were taken on for two, three or five years, and bound by an unstamped indenture or agreement. These were principally girls; the boys, for the sake of the elective franchise, were generally bound for seven years. It was stated before Peel's Committee in 1816, by the Town Clerk of Coventry (p. 4), that in 1812, the demand for labour being very great, numbers of girls had been induced to leave their situations, for the sake of the higher wages in the ribbon trade. The boom collapsed, and many of them came upon the poor rates, or, as it was alleged, on the streets. Weavers' earnings were reduced by one half. Another witness, a master manufacturer, saw in the system a transition to the factory system, and prophesied that if the half-pay apprentice system were not done away with, it

would " cut up the trade wholly, so that there will be no such thing as a journeyman weaver to be found. . . . We shall all build large manufactories to contain from fifty to a hundred looms or upwards, and we must all have these half-pay apprentices, and the journeymen will all be reduced, and they must come to us and work for so much a week or go to the parish."

The effects of industrial change are felt by women directly as members of the family; the impoverishment of the male wage-earner whose occupation is taken away by technical developments means the anguished struggle of the wife and mother to keep her children from starving. The wife could often earn nearly as much as her husband, and the intensest dislike to the factory could not stand against those hard economic facts. The Select Committee on Handloom Weavers, 1834, took evidence from disconsolate broken-hearted men, who showed that their earnings were utterly inadequate for family subsistence and must needs be supplemented by the wives working in factories. One poor Irishman said that he and his little daughter of nine between them minded the baby of fifteen months. Another weaver, a man of his acquaintance, must have starved if he had not had a wife to go out to work for him. The bitterness of the position was accentuated by the fact that the weaver's traditions and associations were bound up with the domestic system, and in no class probably was factory work for women more unwelcome.

The change was resented as a break-up of family life. Hargreaves' spinning jenny, Cartwright's combing machine, Jacquard's loom, to mention no others, were at different times destroyed by an angry mob. With desperate energy the unions long opposed the

introduction of women workers. What drove the men to these hopeless struggles was the lowering of wages that they discerned to be the probable, nay, certain result of both changes. The tragedy of the man who loses his work, or finds its value suddenly shrunken by no fault of his own, is as poignant as any in history. It means not only his own loss and suffering, but the degradation of his standard of life and the break-up of his home. It is not simply man against woman, but man *plus* the wife and children he loves against the outside irresponsible woman (as he conceives her) whose interests are nothing to him.

The Factory.—The great inventions were not, as we so often are apt to imagine them, the effort of a single brain, of " a great man " in the Carlylean sense. Mechanical progress, in its early stages at all events, is often the result of the intelligence of innumerable workers, brought to bear on all kinds of practical difficulties, and mechanical problems. Thus one of the many attempts at a spinning machine was set up in a warehouse in Birmingham in 1741 ; the machine was set in motion by two asses walking round an axis, and ten or a dozen girls were employed in superintending and assisting the operation ! This highly picturesque arrangement proved unworkable and was given up as a failure. Again, at a later date, the first spinning machines that came into general use by the country people of Lancashire were small affairs, and the awkward position required to work them was, as Aikin tells us, " discouraging to grown-up people, who saw with surprise children from nine to twelve years of age manage them with dexterity." In these cases and others like them, we still call the work spinning, because the result is the same as from

hand-spinning, viz. yarn; but in reality the process is new, the work is a rearrangement of human activity, rather than a transfer.

We may very well admit, in the light of present day knowledge, that the transfer of the occupation from the home to the outside factory or workshop was by no means an unqualified loss, was indeed a social advance. The discomfort of using a small and restricted home as a work place, the litter and confusion that are almost inevitable, not to mention the depression of being always in the midst of one's working environment, are such as can hardly be realised by those who have not given attention to industrial matters. But this was not the aspect that the poor weavers themselves could see, or could possibly be expected to see. The break-up of the customary home life endeared to them by long habit and association was only a less misfortune than their increasing destitution. The family ceased to be an industrial unit. The factory demanded "hands." The machines caused a complete shifting of processes of work, a shifting which, I need hardly say, is going on even up to the present time. Much work that had previously been regarded as skilled and difficult, demanding technical training and apprenticeship, became light and easy, within the powers of a child, a young girl, or a woman. On the other hand, work that had been done in every cottage, now was handed over to a skilled male operative, working with all the help capital and elaborate machinery could give him.

The effects of the factory system were the subject of much keen and even violent controversy during the first half of the nineteenth century. During the first two or three decades child-labour was the most

prominent question ; women's labour appears to have been very much taken for granted (Robert Owen, for instance, says little about it) and it became a subject of controversy only about the time of the passing of the first effective Factory Act, in 1833. Baines, Ure, and the elder Cooke Taylor, may be mentioned among those who took an extremely optimistic view of factory industry and devoted much energy and ingenuity to proving it to be innocuous, or even beneficial to health, and on the other hand were P. Gaskell, John Fielden, Philip Grant, and others, who violently attacked it. Even in modern times Schultze-Gävernitz and Allen Clarke have presented us with carefully considered views almost equally divergent. The modern reader, who tries to reconcile opinions so extraordinarily antagonistic may well feel bewildered and despair of arriving at any coherent statement. How are we to account for the fact, for instance, that the development of the factory, with its female labour and machinery, was viewed with the utmost hostility by the workers, and yet on the other hand that the rural labourers streamed into the towns to apply for work in factories, and could seldom or never be induced to go back again ? How are we to account for the extraordinarily different views of men of the same period, intelligent, kind-hearted, and with fair opportunities of judging the facts of social life ? I am far from expecting to solve these questions entirely, but a few considerations may be helpful. In the first place we have to remember that the change brought about by the great industry and the factory system was so far-reaching and so complex that it was impossible for any one human brain at once to grasp the whole. Thus it happened that one set of facts would

appeal strongly to one observer, and another set, equally strongly, to another observer. Each would overlook what to the other was of the greatest importance. Political sentiment also counted for a good deal, the landed interest (mostly Tories) being extremely keen-sighted to any wrongdoing of the manufacturers and their friends (mostly Liberal), while these last were not slow to reciprocate with equally faithful criticism. By taking the optimists alone, or the reformers alone, we get a consistent but inadequate view of industrial conditions. By combining them we arrive at a contradictory, unsatisfactory picture, which may, however, be somewhat nearer the truth than either can give us alone.

It is also necessary to bear in mind the unspoken assumptions, the background, so to speak, existing in any writer's brain. It would make a great difference in a man's view of social conditions in 1825, say, if he was mentally contrasting them with the terrible scarcity and poverty that prevailed at the turn of the century, or if his recollections were mainly occupied with that bright period of prosperity enjoyed by the weavers some years earlier, a prosperity brief indeed, but lasting long enough to make a profound impression on the minds of those who shared in or witnessed it.

Another consideration which is of use in clearing up the chaos of historical evidence on these questions, is the immense variety in conditions from one factory to another. This is the case even at the present day, when the Factory Act requires a certain minimum of decency and comfort. The factory inspectors record the extraordinary difference still existing in these respects, and, as a personal experience, the present writer well remembers the extreme contrast between

two match factories visited some years ago at a very short interval ; the one crowded, gloomy, with weary, exhausted, slatternly-looking girls doing perilous work in a foul atmosphere ; the other with ample space, light, and ventilation, the workers cleanly dressed, and supplied with the best appliances known to make the work safe and harmless. Such an experience is some guide in helping the modern student to comprehend more or less why Fielden wrote of *The Curse of the Factory System*, while Ure could maintain : " The fine spinning mills at Manchester . . . in the beauty, delicacy and ingenuity of the machines have no parallel among the works of man nor *in the orderly arrangement*, and the value of the products."

There is no doubt that the early factories were often run by men who, whatever their energy, thrift, and ability for business, did not mostly possess the qualities necessary to a man who is to have the control, during at least half the week, of a crowd of workers, many of them women and children. Men like Owen and Arkwright were working out a technique and a tradition, not only for the mechanical side, but for the human side of this new business of employment on a large scale. But not all employers were Owens or even Arkwrights. P. Gaskell writes : " Many of the first successful manufacturers were men who had their origin in the rank of mere operatives, or who had sprung from the extinct class of yeomen. . . . The celerity with which some of these individuals accumulated wealth in the early times of steam spinning and weaving, is proof that they were men of quick views, great energy of character, and possessing no small share of sagacity . . . but they were men of very limited general information—men who saw and knew little

of anything beyond the demand for their twist or cloth, and the speediest and best modes for their production. They were, however, from their acquired station, men who exercised very considerable influence upon the hordes of workmen who became dependent upon them."

Here Gaskell has brought out a point which is singularly ignored by the writers of what may be called the optimistic school. We may fully agree with these last in their contention that the working class benefited by the increased production, higher wages, and cheapened goods secured by the factory system, or " great industry," as it is called. But they overlook the point of the immense power that system put into the hands of individual masters, over the lives, and moral and physical health of workers. For the whole day long, and sometimes for the night also, the operative was in the factory ; the temperature of the air he breathed, the hours he worked, the sanitary and other conditions of his work were settled by those in control of the works, who were not responsible in any way to any external supervising authority for the conditions of employment, save to the very limited extent required by the early Factory Acts, which were ineffectively administered. In a curious passage the elder Cooke Taylor, who was in many ways a most careful and intelligent observer, shows how completely he fails to grasp the position :

A factory is an establishment where several workmen are collected together for the purpose of obtaining greater and cheaper conveniences for labour than they could procure individually at their homes ; for producing results by their combined efforts, which they could not accomplish separately. . . . The principle of a factory is that each labourer, working separately, is controlled by some associating principle, which directs his producing powers to effect-

ing a common result, which it is the object of all collectively to attain. Factories are therefore a result of the universal tendency to association which is inherent in our nature, and by the development of which every advance in human improvement and human happiness has been gained.

Every sentence here is true; but the combined effect is not true. Taylor ingenuously omits one important fact. The "associating principle" is the employer working for his own hand, and the "common result" is that employer's profit. Marx saw that the subordination of the workman to the uniform motion of machines, and the bringing together of individuals of both sexes and all ages gave rise to a system of elaborate discipline, dividing the workers into operatives and overlookers, into "private soldiers and sergeants of an industrial army." But it is not necessary to call in the rather suspect authority of Marx. Richards, the Factory Inspector, who by no means took a sentimental view of mill work, had written quite candidly:

A steam engine in the hands of an interested or avaricious master is a relentless power, to which old and young are equally bound to submit. Their position in these mills is that of thraldom; fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen hours per day, is exhausting to the strength of all, yet none dare quit the occupation, from the dread of losing work altogether. Industry is thus in bonds; unprotected children are equally bound to the same drudgery.[1]

This cast-iron regularity of the factory system was felt as a terrible hardship, especially in the case of women, and often amounted to actual slavery.

Wholesale accusations were brought against the factory system as being in itself immoral and a cause

[1] Factory Inspector's Report dated August 1835, quoted in Fielden's *Curse of the Factory System*, 1836, p. 43.

of depravity. Southey said of the factory children, that :

The moral atmosphere wherein they live and move and have their being is as noxious to the soul, as the foul and tainted air which they inhale is to their bodily constitution. . . . What shall we say then of a system which . . . debases all who are engaged in it ? . . . It is a wen, a fungous excrescence from the body politic.

Here we may as well admit that the agitators, though possibly right in their facts, did not represent them in a true perspective. Perhaps the worst feature of working-class life at this time was the scandalous state of housing. The manufacturing towns had grown up rapidly to meet a sudden demand. The progress of enclosing, the decay of home industry, and the call of capital for labour in towns had caused a considerable displacement of population. The immigrants had to find house-room in the outskirts of what had but lately been mere villages. Sanitary science was backward, and municipal government was decadent and could not cope with the rush to the towns. The immigrant population and the existing social conditions were of a type favourable to a rapid increase in numbers, economic independence at an early age not unnaturally tending towards unduly early marriage and irresponsibility of character. Dr. Aikin writes :

As Manchester may bear comparison with the metropolis itself in the rapidity with which whole new streets have been raised, and in its extension on every side toward the surrounding country ; so it unfortunately vies with, or exceeds the metropolis, in the closeness with which the poor are crowded in offensive, dark, damp, and incommodious habitations, a too fertile source of disease.[1]

[1] *Country round Manchester*, p. 192. Compare Mrs. Gaskell's descriptions in *Mary Barton*, fifty years later, for a very similar account.

There is abundant evidence of equally bad conditions in other towns. Such circumstances are inevitably demoralising, and they served to give the impression that the factory population, as such, was extraordinarily wild and wicked. But these particular evils were not specially due to the factory system. In the matter of sanitation and housing there can be little doubt that the rural population was no better, perhaps even worse cared-for than the urban or industrial, the main difference of course being that neglect of cleanliness and elementary methods of sewage disposal are less immediate and disastrous evils among a sparse and scattered population than they are in towns.

Much has been written and spoken about the evils of factory life in withdrawing the mother from the home, and causing neglect of children and infants. Yet even this, an evil which no one would desire to minimise, is not peculiar to factory towns. A report on the state of the Agricultural Population says that :

> Even when they have been taught to read and write, the women of the agricultural labouring class (viz. in Wilts, Devon, and Dorset), are in a state of ignorance affecting the daily welfare and comfort of their families. Ignorance of the commonest things, needlework, cooking, and other matters of domestic economy, is described as universally prevalent. . . . A girl brought up in a cottage until she marries is generally ignorant of nearly everything she ought to be acquainted with for the comfortable and economic management of a cottage . . . a young woman goes into the fields to labour, with which ends all chance of improving her position ; she marries and brings up her daughters in the same ignorance, and their lives are a repetition of her own.

Material progress had completely outdistanced the social side of civilisation. It was easy to see that

old-fashioned restrictions on commerce needed to be swept away, as a trammel and a hindrance; but where was the constructive effort and initiative to shape the new fabric of society that should supply the people's needs?

It was the misfortune of the factory system that it took its sudden start at a moment when the entire energies of the British legislature were preoccupied with the emergencies of the French Revolution. . . . The foundations on which it reposes were laid in obscurity and its early combinations developed without attracting the notice of statesmen or philosophers. . . . There thus crept into unnoticed existence a closely condensed population, under modifying influences the least understood, for whose education, religious wants, legislative and municipal protection, no care was taken and for whose physical necessities the more forethought was requisite, from the very rapidity with which men were attracted to these new centres. To such causes may be referred the incivilisation and immorality of the overcrowded manufacturing towns.[1]

It is curious to compare the criminal neglect here indicated with the self-complacency of the governing classes of this country, and the immense claims for admiration and respect often put forth on account of their control of home and local administration. In this tremendous crisis in the social life of the country, the complex changes of the industrial revolution, the classes in power sat by, apathetic and uninterested, taking little or no pains to cope with the problem, or interfered merely with harsh or even cruel repression of the workers' efforts to combine for self-defence. Although Dr. Percival and Dr. Ferrier had drawn attention to the disease and unhealthy conditions

[1] *Athenaeum*, August 20 (probably 1842), quoted in W. C. Taylor, *Factories and the Factory System*, pp. 3, 4, London, 1842.

existing in factories as far back as 1784 and 1796, it was not until 1833 that a Factory Act was passed containing any administrative provisions that could be deemed effective. Public health measures came later still. Much as the industrial employers were abused by the landowners, it is a fact that reforms and ameliorative projects were started originally by the former. Sir Robert Peel, who owned cotton factories, was the pioneer of factory legislation, and Robert Owen gave the impetus to industrial reform by the humanity and ability that characterised his management of his own mill, and the generosity of his treatment of his own employees.

The Woman Wage-Earner.—The initiation of the factory system undoubtedly fixed and defined the position of the woman wage-earner. For good or for evil, the factory system transformed the nature of much industrial work, rendering it indefinitely heterogeneous, and incidentally opening up new channels for the employment, first, unfortunately, of children, afterwards of women.

In the case of spinning, the division of work between men and women was attended with considerable complications, and it appears that the masters confidently expected to employ women in greater proportions than was actually feasible. A comparison of the evidence by masters and men respectively given before the Select Committee on Artizans and Machinery throws some interesting sidelights on the question, though it does not make it absolutely clear. Dunlop, a Glasgow master, had frequent disputes with the " combination " as the union was then called. He built a new mill with machinery which he hoped would make it unnecessary to employ men at all. In a few years he was, however,

again employing men as before, and his account of the matter was that this change of front was due to the violence of the men's unions. Two of the operative leaders, however, came up at a later stage to protest against Dunlop's version. They showed that the persistent violence attributed to the men really narrowed down to a single case of assault some years before, when there was not sufficient evidence to commit the men accused. They denied the alleged opposition to women's employment and declared that there was absolutely no connexion between the outrage complained of and the substitution of men for women, which had in fact been effected by Dunlop's sons during his absence in America, and was due to the fact that the women could not do as much or as good work on the spinning machines as men could. Dunlop also had given an exaggerated account of the wages paid, making no allowance for stoppage and breakdown of machinery, which were frequent.

A few years later we find some interesting evidence as to the efforts of further developments in spinning machinery. A Mr. Graham told the Select Committee on Manufactures and Commerce that he was introducing self-acting mules, and did not yet know whether women could be adapted to their use, but hoped to get rid of "all the spinners who are making exorbitant wages," and employ piecers only, giving one of the piecers a small increase in wages. He was also employing a number of women upon a different description of wheels, and others in throstle spinning. According to him the women got about 18s. a week, a statement which it would probably be wise to discount. Being asked whether the self-acting mules or the spinning by women would be cheapest, he replied that it was

hoped the spinning by self-acting mules would be cheapest, as even the women were combining and giving trouble. In 1838, Doherty, a labour man, showed that although women were allowed to spin in Manchester, " whole mills of them," the number was being reduced, the physical strength of women being insufficient to work the larger wheels which had come into use. It is useful to obtain some idea of the views of the employing class at a time of such complex changes, and it seems evident that some at least were almost taken off their feet by the exciting prospects opening out to them, and hoped to dispense very largely with skilled male labour, or even with adult labour altogether.

At the present time though there have been great developments in machinery, spinning is the one large department of the cotton industry in which men still exceed women in numbers. The employment of women in ring-spinning is increasing, but there are special counts which can only be done on the mule, which is beyond the woman's strength and skill. Between 1901 and 1911 male cotton-spinners increased in numbers 31 per cent, female 60 per cent. The totals were in 1911 respectively 84,000 and 55,000.

The introduction of the power-loom was a very important event in the history of women's employment. Even in 1840 a woman working a power-loom could do " twice as much " as a man with a hand-loom, and the assistant commissioner who made this observation added the prophecy that in another generation women only would be employed, save a few men for the necessary superintendence and care of the machinery. " There will be no weavers as a class ; the work will be done by the wives of agricultural labourers or

different mechanics." Gaskell, a writer who gave much thought and consideration to the problems before his eyes, and saw a good deal more than many of his contemporaries, also thought that machinery would soon reach a point at which "automata" would have done away with the need of adult workmen.

He says, however, on another page, that "since steam-weaving became general the number of adults engaged in the mills has been progressively advancing inasmuch as very young children are not competent to take charge of steam-looms. The individuals employed at them are chiefly girls and young women, from sixteen to twenty-two."

Gaskell attributed the employment of women in factories, not so much to their taking less wages, as to their being more docile and submissive than men.

> Out of 800 weavers employed in one establishment, and which was . . . composed indiscriminately, of men, women, and children—the one whose earnings were the most considerable, was a girl of sixteen. . . . The mode of payment . . . is payment for work done—piece-work as it is called. . . . Thus this active child is put upon more than a par with the most robust adult; is in fact placed in a situation decidedly advantageous compared to him. . . . Workmen above a certain age are difficult to manage. . . . Men who come late into the trade, learn much more slowly than children . . . and as all are paid alike, so much per pound, or yard, it follows that these men . . . are not more efficient labourers than girls and boys, and much less manageable. . . . Adult male labour having been found difficult to manage and not more productive—its place has, in a great measure, been supplied by children and women; and hence the outcry which has been raised with regard to infant labour, in its moral and physical bearings.

This passage, involved as it is in thought and expression, is not without interest as a reflection of the mind of that time, painfully working out contemporary problems. Gaskell confuses women's labour with child labour, and it is difficult to discover from this book that he has ever given any thought to the former problem at all. The family for him is the social unit, and women are classed with children as beings for whom the family as a matter of course provides. He omits from consideration the woman thrown upon her own exertions, and the grown-up girl, who, even if living at home, must earn. It is not difficult to find other instances of similar *naïveté*; thus in the supplementary Report on Child Labour in Factories, it was gravely suggested that it may be wrong to be much concerned because women's wages are low.

> Nature effects her own purpose wisely and more effectually than could be done by the wisest of men. The low price of female labour makes it the most profitable as well as the most agreeable occupation for a female to superintend her own domestic establishment, and her low wages do not tempt her to abandon the care of her own children.

Here again, there is apparently no perception of the case of the woman, who, by sheer economic necessity, is forced to work, whether for herself alone, or for her children also.

It is hardly necessary to remark that the estimate quoted above, according to which the girl weaving on a power-loom could do twice as much as a man on a hand-loom, has since been enormously exceeded. Schultz-Gävernitz in 1895 thought that a power-loom weaver accomplished about as much as forty good hand-weavers, and no doubt even this estimate is now out

of date. Partly for technical, partly for other reasons, the woman's presence in the factory is now much more taken for granted.

The girl who is to be a weaver begins work usually at twelve years old, the minimum age permitted by law, and may spend six weeks with a relation or friends learning the ways. She thus becomes a "tenter" or "helper," and fetches the weft, carries away the finished goods, sweeps and cleans. At thirteen or fourteen she may have two looms to mind, and will earn about 12s. a week. At sixteen she will be promoted to three looms, and later on to four, beyond which women seldom go; a man sometimes minds six looms, but needs a helper for this extra strain. The work needs considerable skill and attention. Often a four-loom weaver will be turning out four different kinds of cloth on the four looms. It is also fatiguing, as she is on her feet the whole ten hours of her legal day, sometimes, unfortunately, lengthened by the objectionable practice known as "time-cribbing," which means that ten or even fifteen minutes are taken from the legal meal times, and added to the working hours. It takes some years to become an efficient weaver, and the drain on the weaver's strength and vitality is considerable. Where steaming is used, colds and rheumatism are very prevalent. It is noticed by the weavers that the sickness rate is lower in times of bad trade, and indeed slack seasons are regarded as times for much-needed recuperation. Women, although they equal or here and there even excel men in skill and quickness, fail in staying power. Many get fagged out by three o'clock in the afternoon. The great increase in speed is also a factor in sickness. Weavers are now said to be doing as much work in a day as in a day and a half twelve or

thirteen years ago, and the wages have increased, but not proportionately. The work involves not only physical, but mental strain, and many cases of nervous break-down and anaemia are known to occur among weavers. It should not be forgotten that many women and girls have domestic work to do after their day's work in the mill is over, and the high standard of comfort and " house pride " in Lancashire makes this a considerable addition.

Another large class of women cotton operatives are the card-room workers, officially described as " card- and blowing-room operatives." In this department men and women do different work. The men do the more dangerous, more unhealthy, and also the better paid work. Women's work also is dangerous, and unhealthy from the dust and cotton fibre that pervade the atmosphere. An agitation is on foot to have a dust-extractor fixed to every carding-engine. The operatives suffer chiefly from excessive speed and pressure. They are continually pressed to keep the machines going, and not to stop them even for necessary cleaning, and I am assured by a card-room operative that in the card-room the highest percentage of accidents for the week occurs on Friday, when the principal weekly cleaning takes place, and the lowest on Monday, when cleaning is not required ; also that the highest percentage of accidents during the day occurs on an average between 10 A.M. and 12 noon, when the dirtiest parts of the machinery are usually wiped over. The chief cause of these accidents is cleaning while the machinery is in motion. The present rate of speed produces extreme exhaustion in the workers, and some consider that card-room work is altogether too hard for women, and not suitable to their

physical capacity. It is said to be done entirely by men in America.

The male weaver is by no means extinct, as the prophets we have quoted seemed to expect. Cotton-weaving offers the very unusual, perhaps unique example of a large occupation employing both man and woman, and on equal terms. The earnings of the male weaver are, however, very inferior to those of the spinner, and he cannot unaided support a family without being considerably straitened, according to the Lancashire standard. But, in point of fact, a weaver when he marries usually marries a woman who is also working at a mill, and if she is a weaver her earnings are very likely as good as his. In this industry women attain to very nearly as great skill and dexterity as do men ; in some branches even greater. In Lancashire the standard of working-class life and comfort is high, and a woman whose husband is a weaver will not brook that her next-door neighbour, whose husband may be a spinner or machine-maker, should dress their children better, or have better window-curtains than she can. She continues to work at her own trade, and the two incomes are combined until the woman is temporarily prevented working at the mill. An interval of some months may be taken off by a weaver for the birth of her baby, but she will return to the mill afterwards, and again after a second ; at the third or fourth child she usually retires from industry. Later on the children begin earning. Thus the male weaver's most difficult and troubled times are when his children are quite young, his wife temporarily incapacitated, and his earnings their sole support. When both husband and wife are earning, their means are good relatively to their standard ; and again as

the young people grow up, the combined income of the family may be even ample. The young children whose mother is absent at work are looked after in the day-time by a grandmother, or by a neighbour who is paid for the work. It was stated, half-ironically, perhaps, before the Labour Commission that there was a " standard list for this sort of business." Opinions differ as to whether the children are or are not neglected under this system. There is, however, evidence to show that many Lancashire women, at least among those who are relatively well paid, are good mothers and good housekeepers even though they work their ten hours a day. They go to work because their standard of life is high, and they cannot live up to it without working.

The Industrial Revolution in Non-Textile Trades.— This subject, though sociologically of great interest, cannot here be treated at length ; it must suffice to indicate a few points in regard to women, trusting that some later writer will some day paint for England a finished picture on the scale of Miss Butler's fine study " Women and the Trades," of Pittsburgh, U.S.A.

The factory system has now invaded one manufacturing industry after another, and the use of power and division of work in numerous processes have opened a considerable amount of employment to women. There have been two lines of development ; on the one hand, occupations have been opened for women in trades with which previously they had nothing, or very little to do ; on the other hand, industries hitherto almost entirely in the hands of women, and carried on chiefly in homes or small workrooms or shops, such as dressmaking, the making of underclothing, laundry work and so on, have been to some extent changed in

character, and have in part become factory industries of the modern type.

In 1843 the sub-commissioner who investigated Birmingham industries for the Children's Employment Commission, was struck by the extent of women's and children's employment. Very large numbers of children were employed in a great variety of manufacturing processes, and women's labour was being substituted for men's in many branches. In all trades there were at the same time complaints of want of employment and urgent distress, involving large numbers of mechanics. Mr. Grainger saw women employed in laborious work, such as stamping buttons and brass nails, and notching the heads of screws, and considered these to be unfit occupations for women. In screw manufactories the women and girls constituted 80 to 90 per cent of the whole number employed. A considerable number of girls, fourteen and upwards, were employed in warehouses packing the goods, giving in and taking out work. Non-textile industries were as yet quite unregulated, and many of the reports made to this commissioner indicate very bad conditions as to health and morals. The sanitary conditions were atrocious, except where the employers were specially conscientious and gave attention to the subject; there was little protection against accident, and child-labour was permitted at very early years. Most of the abuses noted had to do either with insanitary conditions or with child-labour. The women and girls are described as having been often twisted or injured by premature employment, and as being totally without education. One witness who gave evidence considered that the lack of education was more disastrous for girls than for boys.

In 1864 the Children's Employment Commission found that the number and size of large factories had grown since 1841, and the number of women in the Birmingham district employed in metal manufactures was estimated at 10,000.

In 1866, when the British Association visited Birmingham, Mr. S. Timmins prepared a series of reports on local industries, the index of which gives no less than thirty-six references to women, which is some indication how widely they were employed. In the steel pen trade, for instance, which had developed from a small trade in hand-made pens, costing several shillings each, into a large factory industry, numbers of girls and women were employed, and a comparatively small proportion of men. In 1866, there were estimated to be 360 men, 2050 women and girls employed in Birmingham pen-works. Women were employed extensively in the light chain trade, also in lacquering in the brass trade, and in many other occupations. Successive censuses show very rapid increases in the employment of women in the metal trades generally, though, of course, they bear a much lower proportion to men in these trades taken as a whole than in the textile trades.

Similar developments are taking place in food and tobacco trades, soap, chemicals, paper and stationery. The boot and shoe trade is a good example of the rapid opening-out of opportunities for women's employment. At the time of the Labour Commission (1893) it was noted that Bristol factories were mostly not up to date or efficient. Since that time there has been a rapid extension of factory work for women, and the methods in the boot and shoe trade have been revolutionised by the introduction of the power sewing-

machine, and by production on a large scale. The new factories in or near Bristol have lofty rooms, modern improved sanitary and warming apparatus, and the best are carefully arranged with a view to maintaining the health and efficiency of the workers.

In 1903 a committee of the Economic Section of the British Association found in Sheffield that machinery had been displacing file cutlery made by hand for fifteen years past, and some women were already finding employment on the lighter machines. In Coventry the cycle industry employed an increasing number of women; watchmaking was becoming a factory industry, and the proportion of women to men had increased rapidly. Women are even employed in some processes subsidiary to engineering, such as core-making. But it should be remembered that these openings for women do not necessarily mean permanent loss of work for men, though some temporary loss there no doubt very often is. The rearrangement of industry and the subdivision of processes mean that new processes are appropriated to women; and it is likely enough that among factory operatives women are, and will be, an increasing proportion. But therewith must come an increasing demand for men's labour in mining, smelting and forging metal, and in other branches into which women are unlikely to intrude.

In the clothing trades the industrial revolution has made some way, and is doubtless going to make still more way, but it is unlikely that the older-fashioned methods of tailoring and dressmaking can ever be superseded as completely as was the hand-loom weaving in the cotton trade. Dress is a matter of individual taste and fancy, and much as the factory-made clothing and dressmaking has improved in the last ten or twenty

years, it is unlikely ever to supply the market entirely. Stay-making is a rapidly developing factory industry at Bristol, Ipswich and elsewhere. In underclothing and children's clothing also the factory system is making considerable advances. It is startling to see babies' frocks or pinafores made on inhuman machines moved by power, with rows of fixed needles whisking over the elaborate tucks; but if the resulting article be both good and cheap, and the women operatives paid much better than they would be for the same number of hours' needlework, sentimental objections are perhaps out of place.

In such factories as I have been permitted to visit, mostly non-textile, I have noticed that men and women are usually doing, not the same, but different kinds of work, and that the work done by women seems to fall roughly into three classes. My classification is probably quite unscientific, and indicates merely a certain social order perceived or conceived by an observer ignorant of the technical side of manufacturing and chiefly interested in the social or sociological aspect. In the first place, there is usually some amount of rough hard work in the preparing and collecting of the material, or the transporting it from one part of the factory to another. Such work is exemplified by the rag-cutting in paper-mills, fruit-picking in jam factories, the sorting soiled clothes in laundries, the carrying of loads from one room to another, and such odd jobs. I incline to think that the arrangements made for dealing with this class of work are a very fair index to the character and ability of the employer. In good paper-mills, for instance, though nothing could make rag-cutting an attractive job, its objectionable features are mitigated by a preliminary cleansing of the rags, and by good

ventilation in the work. In ill-managed factories of various kinds the carrying of heavy loads is left to the women workers' unaided strength, and is a most unpleasing sight to those who do not care to see their sisters acting as beasts of burden, not to mention that heavy weight-carrying is often highly injurious, provoking internal trouble. In the case of trays of boiling fruit, jam, etc., it may lead to horrible accidents. In well-managed factories this carrying of loads is arranged for by mechanical means or a strong porter is retained for the purpose.

The second class of work noticed as being done by women is work done on machines with or without power, and this includes a whole host of employments and an endless variety of problems. Machine tending, press-work, stamp-work, metal-cutting, printing, various processes of brass work, pen-making, machine ironing in laundries, the making of " hollow ware " or tin pots and buckets of various kinds ; such afe a few of the kinds of work that occur to me. Many of them have the interesting characteristic of forming a kind of borderland or marginal region where men and women, by exception, do the same kinds of work. It is in these kinds of work that difficulties occur in imperfectly organised trades ; it is here that the employer is constantly pushing the women workers a little further on and the male workers a little further off ; it is here that controversies rage over what is " suitable to women," and that recriminations pass between trade unions and enterprising employers. These kinds of work may be very hard, or very easy, they may need skill and afford some measure of technical interest, or they may be merely dull and monotonous, efficiency being measured merely by speed ; they may be badly paid, but on the

other hand they include some of the best paid of women's industrial occupations. They are in a continual state of flux, responding to every technical advance, and change in methods ; they represent the industrial revolution at its tensest and most critical point. And to conclude, it is here that organisation for women is most necessary and desirable in the interests of all classes.

The third kind of work noted by the detached observer is more difficult to define in a word ; it consists in the finishing and preparing goods for sale, and in the various kinds of work known as warehouse work. As a separate class it results mainly from the increasing size of firms and the quantity of work done. Paper-sorting or overlooking in paper-mills is typical of this class of work ; it consists in separating faulty sheets of paper from those that are good, and is done at great speed by girls who have a quick eye and a light touch. It is said to be work that men entirely fail in, not having sufficiently sensitive finger-tips. In nearly all factories there is a great deal of this kind of work, monotonous no doubt, but usually clean in character, and less hard and involving considerably less strain than either of the two former classes of work. In confectionery or stationery works, for instance, to mention two only, troops of girls are seen busily engaged at great speed in making up neat little packets of the finished article, usually with an advertisement or a picture put inside. In china or glass works girls may be employed wrapping the goods in paper, and similar jobs are found in many classes of work. In a well-known factory in East London where food for pet animals is made or prepared, I was told some years ago that no girls at all had been employed until recently, when about forty were taken on

for the work of doing up the finished article in neat packets for sale. It is noticeable that the girls who are thus employed are usually of a social grade superior to the two former classes, though they by no means always earn better wages. They are very frequently the daughters of artisans earning good wages, and expect to marry in their own class and leave work. The women employed in the second class of work indicated, viz. chiefly on or about the machines, are on the whole more enterprising, and more likely to join unions. These again are socially superior to No. 1. No. 1 class, those who do the rough hard kind of work, are mainly employed for the sake of cheapness, are often married women, and are probably doing much the same kinds of work that were done by women in those trades before the transformation of industry by machinery. (This is merely an inference of mine, and can scarcely be proved, but it seems likely to be true.) The more perfectly the industry develops and becomes organised, the more machinery is used and different processes are adapted to utilise different classes of skilled effort, the less need will there be for class No. 1 work to be done at all.

It should be noted before we leave this subject that No. 2 class work is especially liable to change and modification, which means change in the demand for labour, and often means a demand for a different class of labour, or a different kind of skill. There are some who think pessimistically that improved machinery must mean a demand for a lower grade of skill. No doubt it often *has* meant that, and still does in instances. But it is far from being universally true. As the hand-press is exchanged for the power-press, the demand occurs for a worker sufficiently careful and responsible

to be trusted with the new and more valuable machinery. Again, when a group of processes needing little skill is taken over by an automatic machine that performs the whole complex of operations, several unskilled workers will be displaced by one of a higher grade. The new automatic looms worked by electric power are, I am told, involving the employment of a class of young women superior in general intelligence and education to the typical weaver, though not necessarily so in manual skill.

Conclusion.—Frau Braun sees in the machine the main cause of the development of woman's industrial employment.[1] A more recent writer, Mrs. Schreiner, takes exactly the opposite view :

> The changes . . . which we sum up under the compendious term " modern civilisation," have tended to rob woman, not merely in part, but almost wholly, of the more valuable of her ancient domain of productive and social labour ; and where there has not been a determined and conscious resistance on her part, have nowhere spontaneously tended to open out to her new and compensatory fields. It is this fact which constitutes our modern " Woman's Labour Problem." Our spinning-wheels are all broken ; in a thousand huge buildings steam-driven looms, guided by a few hundred thousands of hands (often those of men), produce the clothings of half the world ; and we dare no longer say, proudly, as of old, that we, and we alone clothe our peoples.[2]

It is a striking instance of the extraordinary complexity of modern industry that two distinguished writers like Frau Braun and Mrs. Schreiner, both holding advanced views on the feminist question,

[1] L. Braun, *Die Frauenfrage*, p. 209. Cf. E. Gnauck-Kühne, *Die Arbeiterinnenfrage* 23.

[2] *Woman and Labour*, p. 50.

should thus come to opposite conclusions as to the influence of the machine. In a sense, the opposition is more apparent than real. Mrs. Schreiner is thinking of production for use by the woman at home, and there is no question that production for use is being superseded by production for exchange. Frau Braun, in the passage quoted, is writing of wage-earning employment. There can be little question that the evolution of machinery has favoured woman's employment. Woman has no chance against man where sheer strength is needed ; but when mechanical power takes the place of human muscle, when the hard part is done by the machine, then the child, the girl, or the woman is introduced. The progressive restriction of child-labour has also favoured women, so that over the period covered by the factory statistics, the percentage of women and girls employed has increased in a very remarkable way.

It is possible to exaggerate the extent of the change made by the industrial revolution in taking women out of the home. We must remember that domestic service, the traditional and long-standing occupation of women, is always carried on away from the home of the worker, and does in fact (as it usually involves residence) divide the worker from her family far more completely than ordinary day work. The instances given in Chapter I. also show that not only agriculture, but various other industries, afforded employment to women, long before the industrial revolution, in ways that must have involved "going out to work." To the working classes it was nothing new to see women work, and, in point of fact, we do not find even the employment of married women exciting much attention or disapproval at the outset of the factory system. In

the non-domestic industries the question of the wife taking work for wages was probably then, as mainly it still is, a poverty question. The irregular employment, sickness or incapacity of the male bread-winner that result in earnings insufficient for family maintenance, occurred probably with no less frequency in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than now, and these are causes that at all times drive married women to work, if they can get work to do. The class that felt it most keenly as an evil and a wrong, were the hand-loom weavers whose earnings were so depressed that they could not maintain their families, and found at the same time that the labour of their wives and daughters was more in demand than their own. Where the industry had been carried on by the family working together, and, for a time at least, had been sufficiently lucrative to afford a comparatively high standard of comfort, the disintegration of this particular type of organisation was, not unnaturally, resented as an outrage on humanity. The iron regularity of the factory system, the economic pressure that kept the workers toiling as long as the engines could run, the fixation of hours, were cruel hardships to a class that had formed its habits and traditions in the small self-contained workshop, and made continuous employment a terrible strain on the married woman. As the home centres round the woman, the problem for the working woman has been, and is, one of enormous difficulty, involving considerable restatement of her traditional codes and customs.

Whatever may have been the social misery and disorder brought about by the industrial revolution, one striking result was an increase in the earning power of women. Proof in detail of this statement will be

given in Chapter VI.; for the present it will suffice to point to the fact. The machine, replacing muscular power and increasing the productivity of industry, does undoubtedly aid the woman in quest of self-dependence. In the era of the great industry she has become to an increasing extent an independent wage-earner. Low as the standard of women's wages is, there is ample proof that it is on the whole higher under the factory system than under other methods, and as a general rule the larger and more highly organised factory pays higher wages than the smaller, less well-equipped. The cotton industry, which took the lead in introducing the factory system, and is in England by far the most highly organised and efficiently managed among trades in which women predominate, has shown a remarkable rise of wages through the last century, and is now the only large industry in which the average wage of women is comparatively high. Another point is that factory dressmaking, which has developed in comparatively recent years, already shows a higher average wage than the older-fashioned dressmaking carried on in small establishments, and a much smaller percentage of workers paid under 10s. a week. Monsieur Aftalion, in a monograph comparing factory and home work in the French clothing trade, finds wages markedly higher under the factory system. Yet another instance is offered by Italy, where women's wages are miserably low, yet they are noticeably higher in big factories than in small.

The development of the single young woman's position through the factory system has been obscured by the abuses incidental to that system, which were due more or less to historical causes outside industry. The absence of any system of control over industrial

and sanitary conditions undoubtedly left many factories to become centres of disease, overwork and moral corruption, and the victims of this misgovernment and neglect are a reproach that can never be wiped out. On the other hand, later experience has shown that decent conditions of work are easier to secure in factories than in small work places, owing to greater publicity and facility for inspection. The very fact of the size of the factory, its economic importance, and its almost dramatic significance for social life, caused attention to be drawn to, and wrath to be excited by, evil conditions in the factory, which would have been little noticed in ordinary small work places.

The initiation of the " great industry " resulted in a kind of searchlight being turned on to the dark places of poverty. State interference had to be undertaken, although in flat opposition to the dominant economics of the day, and the better sort of masters were impelled by shame or worthier motives to get rid of the stigma that clung to factory employment. Now the girl-worker has profited by this movement in a quite remarkable degree. Domestic service is no longer her only outlook, and the conditions of domestic service have probably considerably improved in consequence. Her employment is no longer bound up with personal dependence on her own family, or personal servitude in her employer's.

The wage contract, though not, we may hope, the final or ideal stage in the evolution of woman's economic position, is an advance from her servile state in the mediaeval working class, or parasitic dependence on the family. The transition thus endows her with greater freedom to dispose of or deny herself in marriage, and is an important step towards higher

racial ideals and development. Grievously exploited as her employment has been and still is, the evolution of the woman wage-earner, her gradual achievement of economic individuality and independence, in however limited a degree, is certainly one of the most interesting social facts of the time. The remarkable intelligence and ability of Lancashire working people was noticed by Mrs. Gaskell in *Mary Barton*, as long ago as 1848. And to this day the Co-operative Movement and the Trade Union Movement flourish among Lancashire women as they do not anywhere else. The Workers' Educational Association draws many of its best students from these women who toil their ten hours in the mill and use their brains for study in the evening after work is over.

CHAPTER III.

STATISTICS OF THE LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN.

No very detailed or elaborate statistics will be here employed, the aim of this chapter being merely to draw attention to certain broad facts or relations disclosed by the Census and the Registrar-General's Report.

The Surplus of Women.—It is a well-known fact that in this country women exceed men in numbers. The surplus increased slightly but steadily from 1851 to 1901, and remained almost stationary from 1901 to 1911. In 1901 and 1911 there were in every 1000 persons 484 males and 516 females. The excess of females varies at different ages. The number of boys born exceeds the number of girls in a proportion not far from 4 per cent, sometimes a little more, sometimes a little less. But boy infants run greater risks at birth and appear to be altogether more susceptible to adverse influences, for their death-rate is usually higher up to 3, 4 or 5 years old. The age-group 5 to 10 varies from time to time; in 1901–1910 the average mortality of girls was the higher: in 1912 the average mortality of boys was very slightly higher. From 10 to 15 the female death-rate is higher than the male.

The age-group 15 to 20 shows very curious variations in the relative mortality of males and females. From 1894 onwards the males of that group have had a higher mortality than the females, whereas previous to that date the female mortality was the higher, in all years of which we have a record save two—1876 and 1890. The Registrar-General can suggest no explanation of this phenomenon.[1] It may be remarked, however, that girls generally now obtain more opportunity for fresh air and physical exercise than in former years, which may account for some of their comparative improvement in this respect; also that in the industrial districts a great improvement has taken place in the administration of the Factory Act since the appointment of women inspectors and the general raising of the standard after the Act of 1891, and girls may naturally be supposed to have profited more by this improved administration than have youths of the other sex, who are not included under the Act when over 18 years, and in many cases pass into industries unregulated by law.

The following table shows the death-rates per 1000 of male and female persons in England and Wales, 1913, and the ratio of male per cent of female mortality at age periods, as calculated by the Registrar-General.

[1] Registrar-General's Report for 1912, p. xxxvii.

[TABLE

DEATH-RATES AT AGES, 1913.

Ages.	M.	F.	Ratio M. per 100 F.
0-1	120	96	125
0-5	39·2	32·2	122
5-	3·1	3·1	100
10-	1·9	2·0	95
15-	2·7	2·5	108
20-	3·5	3·0	117
25-	4·6	3·8	121
35-	8·0	6·5	123
45-	15·0	11·5	130
55-	30·7	23·0	133
65-	64·5	51·1	126
75-	140·4	117·5	119
85-	266·8	241·0	111
Total	14·7	12·8	115

As might be expected from these figures, the Census shows that males are in excess of females in very early life, but are gradually overtaken, and in later years especially men are considerably outnumbered by women. The disproportion of women is mainly due to their lower death-rate, but also in part to the fact that so many men go abroad for professional or commercial avocations. Some of these are accompanied by wives or sisters, but a large proportion go alone.

The disproportion of women is more marked in town districts than in rural ones. This may be partly due to the lower infant death-rate in the country, for a high rate of infant mortality on an average affects more boys than girls. But no doubt the large demand for young women's labour in factories and as domestic

servants is another cause of the surplus of women in towns. In rural districts there is a surplus of males over females up to the age of 25. The disproportion of women does not show any marked tendency to increase except among the elderly, the preponderance becoming increasingly marked towards old age. It would overload this chapter too much to give figures illustrating the changes in the last half century ; those who wish to make themselves acquainted with the matter can refer to the very full and interesting tables given near the end of Vol. VII. of the Census, 1911.

Marriage.—The preponderance of young women, though not very considerable in figures, is, however, in fact a more effective restriction of marriage than might be expected, because women are by custom more likely to marry young than men, and thus the numbers of marriageable young women at any given date exceed the corresponding numbers of men in a proportion higher than the actual surplus of young women in particular age-groups.

The old-fashioned optimistic assumption that women will all get married and be provided for by their husbands, cannot be maintained. It is possible, however, to be needlessly pessimistic on this head, as in a certain weekly journal which recently proclaimed that "two out of every three women die old maids." If we are to regard marriage as an occupation (an idea with which, on the whole, I disagree), it is still the most important and extensively followed occupation for women. In 1911 over 6½ millions of women in England and Wales were married, or rather more than one-half the female population over 15 ; and considerably more than one-half of our women get married some time or other. In middle life, say from 35 to 55, three-fourths

of all women are married. In early life a large proportion are single ; in later life a large proportion are widows. Or we might put it in another way. From the age of 20 to 35, only two out of every four women are married, nearly all the rest being still single, and a very small proportion widowed ; from 35 to 55, three in every four women are married ; over 55, less than two in every four are married, most of the others having become widows. The proportion of women married has increased since the previous Census, but has decreased slightly at all ages under 45.

The following table displays the proportion married and widowed per cent of the different age-groups.

Ages.	Single.	Married.	Widowed.
15-20	99	1	0
20-25	76	24	0
25-35	36	63	1
35-45	20	75	5
45-55	16	71	13
55-65	13	59	28
65-	12	31	57
All ages	39	51	10

If the figures were drawn in curves, it would be seen that the proportion of single women falls rapidly from youth onwards, and is quite small in old age ; that the proportion married rises rapidly at first, remaining high for 20 or 30 years, and falls again, forming a broad mound-shaped curve ; while the proportion widowed rises all the way to old age.

It will be seen that, even on the assumption that all wives are provided for by their husbands, which is by

no means universally true, a very large proportion of women before 35 and after 55 are not thus provided for, and that an unknown but not inconsiderable proportion never marry at all. In the case of the educated middle class, as Miss Collet pointed out in 1892, the surplus of women over men is considerably above the average, and consequently the prospect of marriage is less in this than in the working class. "Granted an equal number of males and females between the ages of 18 and 30, we have not therefore in English society an equal number of marriageable men and women. Wherever rather late marriage is the rule with men—that is, wherever there is a high standard of comfort—the disproportion is correspondingly great. In a district where boy and girl marriages are very common, everybody can be married and be more or less miserable ever after: but in the upper middle class equality in numbers at certain ages implies a surplus of marriageable women over marriageable men." [1]

In some quarters the adoption of professions, even of the teaching profession, by women, is opposed on the ground that women are thereby drawn away from marriage and home-making. It is difficult to understand how such an objection can be seriously raised in face of the facts of social life. The adoption of occupations by women may in a few cases indicate a preference for independence and single blessedness; but it is much more often due to economic necessity. It is perfectly plain that not all women can be maintained by men, even if this were desirable. The women who have evolved a theory of "economic independence"

[1] "Prospects of Marriage for Women," by Clara Collet, *Nineteenth Century*, April 1892, reprinted in *Educated Working Women*, P. S. King, 1902.

are few compared with the many who have economic self-dependence forced upon them. Human nature is far too strong to make it credible that any large number of women will deliberately decline the prospect of husband, home and children of their own for the sake of teaching little girls arithmetic or inspecting insanitary conditions in slums. If a woman has to choose between marrying a man she cares for and earning her own bread, I am sentimental enough to believe that nearly all women would choose the former. The choices of real life are seldom quite so simple. When a woman has to choose between an uncongenial marriage and fairly well-paid work, it is quite likely that nowadays she frequently chooses the latter. In former days the choice might easily have been among the alternatives of the uncongenial marriage, the charity, willing or unwilling, of friends and relations, and sheer starvation, not to mention that even the bitter relief of the uncongenial marriage, usually available in fiction, is not always forthcoming in real life. The case grows clearer every year, that women need training and opportunity to be able to support themselves, though not all women will do so throughout life.

Occupation.—If we have any doubt of the fact that there is still "a deal of human nature" in girls and women, we have only to compare the Census statistics of occupation and marriage. We have already seen that the numbers married increase up to 45. As the number married increases the number occupied rapidly falls off. The percentage of women and girls over 15 who are occupied was, in 1911, 35.5; an increase of 1.0 since 1901.

This does not, however, mean that only a little more than one-third of all women enter upon a trade

or occupation. In point of fact a very large proportion are workers in early youth, as the following tables show. In order to illustrate the relation of occupation to marriage, we place the two sets of figures side by side.

		Percentage Occupied.	Percentage Married.
Girls aged	10-13	1·0	..
,,	13-14	11·3	..
,,	14-15	38·7	..
,,	15-16	57·6	
,,	16-17	66·8	
,,	17-18	71·9	1·2
,,	18-19	74·3	
,,	19-20	73·4	
Women aged	20-25	62·0	24·2
,,	25-35	33·8	63·2
,,	35-45	24·1	75·3
,,	45-55	23·1	70·9
,,	55-65	20·4	58·4
,,	65-	11·5	31·3

The highest percentage of employment therefore occurs at the age of 18.

The next table shows the proportions of workers in age-groups.

[TABLE

WOMEN AND GIRL WORKERS OVER TEN YEARS OLD.

	Number.	Per cent of Total.
10-15	182,493	3·8
15-20	1,156,851	23·9
20-25	1,037,321	21·5
25-35	1,057,275	21·9
35-45	604,769	12·5
45-55	422,464	8·7
55-	369,561	7·7
	4,830,734	100·0

Over 49 per cent of the total are under 25, and are therefore in ordinary speech more commonly termed girl than women workers. The rise in the proportion married compared with the drop in the proportion occupied as age advances, indicates how strong the hold and attraction of the family is upon women. Conditions in factories are undoubtedly improved; many a girl of 20 or 22, perhaps earning 18s. a week, with her club, her classes, her friends, and an occasional outing, has by no means a "bad time." On the other hand, the life of the married woman in the working class is often extremely hard, taking into account the large amount of work done by them at home, cooking, cleaning, washing, mending and making of clothes, in the North also baking of bread, tendance of children and of the sick, over and above and all but simultaneously with the bringing of babies into the world. Moreover, the working girl is not under illusions as to the facts of life, as her better-off contemporary still is to some extent. Taking all this into consideration, the Census results shown above form an illuminating

testimony to the strength of the fundamental human instincts.

The distribution of women in occupations illustrates both the deeply rooted conservatism of women and, at the same time, the modifying tendency of modern industry. The largest groups of women's trades are still their traditional activities of household work, the manufacture of stuffs, and the making of stuffs into clothes. Two-thirds of the women occupied are thus employed.

	Number.	Per cent of Total occupied.
Domestic offices and service (including laundry) . .	1,734,040	35·9
Textiles	746,154	15·5
Dress	755,964	15·6

It is convenient to picture to oneself the female working population as three great groups: the domestic group, the textile and clothing group, and the other miscellaneous occupations, which also form about one-third of the total. Now, while it is true that the two former groups, the traditional or conservative occupations of women, are still the largest, they are not, with the exception of textiles, increasing as fast as population, whereas some of the newer occupations, the non-textile industrial processes that have been transformed by machinery and brought within the capacity of women, are, though much smaller in numbers, increasing at a rapid rate. The following table shows the change from 1901 to 1911 in the most important industrial groups including

women. It should be read bearing in mind that the increase of the female population over 10 in the same period is 12.6 per cent.

ENGLAND AND WALES, 1901–1911.

Occupations of Women and Girls.	Numbers.		Percentage Change.
	1901.	1911.	
Domestic offices and service . . .	1,690,722	1,734,040	+2·6
Textiles	663,222	746,154	+12·5
Dress	710,961	755,964	+6·3
Dressmakers . .	340,582	339,240	−0·4
Tailoresses . .	117,640	127,115	+8·1
Food, drink, and lodging	299,518	474,683	+58·5
Paper, books, and stationery . . .	90,900	121,309	+33·5
Metals, machines, etc. .	63,016	101,050	+60·4
Increase of female population over 10 .	..	..	+12·6

But even with the occupations I have dubbed "conservative," or traditional, modern methods are transforming the nature of the work done by women. The statistical changes in the so-called domestic group are an interesting illustration of the changes we can see going on in the world around us. Note especially the tendency towards a more developed social life outside the home indicated by the large percentage increase in club service, hotel and eating-house service; the tendency to supersede amateur by expert nursing, shown in the large increase in hospital and institutional

service; and the slight but perceptible tendency for household work to lose its domestic character. Not only do the charwomen show an increase much larger than that of the group total, while the domestic indoor servant has decreased, but a new sub-heading, "day servants," has had to be introduced. The laundry is fast becoming a regular factory industry, and shows a decrease in numbers, no doubt due to the introduction of machinery and labour-saving appliances.

CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN CERTAIN DOMESTIC OCCUPATIONS.

Occupation.	Numbers.		Percentage Change.
	1901.	1911.	
Hotel, eating-house, etc.	45,711	63,368	+38·6
Other domestic indoor servants	1,285,072	1,271,990	+0·8
Day girls		24,001	
College, club, etc.	1,680	3,347	+99·2
Hospital, institution, etc.	26,341	41,639	+58·1
Caretakers	13,314	18,633	+39·95
Cooks, not domestic	8,615	13,538	+57·1
Charwomen	111,841	126,061	+12·7
Laundry	196,141	167,052	−14·8

Textiles, which as a whole have increased exactly in proportion to population, show a great variety in movement. The following shows the movement in the numerically more important groups.

	Numbers.		Percentage Change.
	1901.	1911.	
Cotton—			
Card-room operatives	46,135	55,488	+20·3
Spinning . . .	34,553	55,448	+60·5
Winding, warping .	64,742	59,171	−8·6
Weaving . . .	175,158	190,922	+9·0
Wool—			
Spinning . . .	35,782	45,310	+26·6
Weaving . . .	67,067	67,499	+0·6
Hosiery	34,481	41,431	+20·2
Lace	23,807	25,822	+8·5

In " Dress " the most noticeable feature is that in a decade of rapidly increasing wealth and certainly of no diminution in the feminine tendency to adornment and display, the numbers of dressmakers decreased by a few hundreds. Tailoresses, on the other hand, increased considerably more than the increase in the whole group, and " Dealers " also show a large increase. The Census unfortunately throws very little light so far on the development of the various factory industries for making clothes, and the Factory Department statistics are now so considerably out of date as to be of little value. In default of further information we may guess that a very considerable economy of methods has been effected in the making of women's clothes by the introduction of machinery and the factory system, and that some of the large mass of customers of moderate incomes are tending to desert the old-fashioned working dressmakers and buy ready-made clothes, which have noticeably improved in

style and quality in recent years. But the older-fashioned methods probably hold the larger part of the field, even now.

The increasing employment of women in metal trades is certainly a very remarkable feature of the present Census, the numbers having jumped up from 63,000 to 101,000 in ten years. The cycle and motor manufactures, which employed less than 3000 women in 1901, employed not far short of 7000 in 1911. Nearly all the small groups and subdivisions of metal work show an increase of female employment. For instance, women employed in electrical apparatus-making increased from 2490 in 1901 to over 9000 in 1911.

The whole subject is one of great interest, as illustrating the progress of the industrial revolution in the trades affected, but is impossible to treat here at length.

The Reaction of Status on Industry.—In spite of the increased range of occupations open to women, it must be added that the position of woman is a highly insecure one, and that she is considerably handicapped by the reaction of status on occupation. We have seen that while most women work for wages in early life, their work is usually not permanent, but is abandoned on marriage, precisely at the time of life when the greatest economic efficiency may be looked for. On the other hand, the superior longevity of women and the greater risks to which men are exposed, leave many women widows and unprovided for in middle or even early life. Some women are unfortunate in marriage, the husband turning out idle, incompetent, of feeble health or bad habits, and in such circumstances women may need to return to their work after some years' cessation. But factory industries and indeed nearly all women's occupations make a greater demand for

the young than for the middle-aged or old. Wages are supposed to be based upon a single woman's requirements. Even if the destitute widow or the deserted wife can succeed in obtaining fairly well-paid work, there emerges the difficulty of looking after her home and children simultaneously with doing work for wages.

The ordinary view of the subject is that a woman need not be paid as much as a man, because her requirements are less, and she is likely to be partially maintained by others. The question of wages will be discussed in a later chapter, but it may here be pointed out that the facts revealed by the Census show that the status of women is a very heavy handicap to their economic position. Normally, women leave their occupation about the time when they might otherwise expect to attain their greatest efficiency, and those who return to work in later years are under the disadvantage of having spent their best years in work which by no means helps their professional or industrial efficiency, though it may be of the greatest social usefulness. If a woman cannot expect to be paid more than the commercial value of her work when she has children entirely dependent on her, it seems inconsistent that she should be expected to take less than the value of her work when she is partially maintained at home ; surely the wiser course would be to strive to raise the standard of remuneration so as to benefit those who have the heavier obligations.

The same kind of thoughtless inconsistency is seen in dealing with the problem of married women's work. Many observers of social life are struck by the fact that it is sad and in some cases even disastrous for a woman to go out to work and leave her infant children unprotected and untended. The proposal is constantly

forthcoming to prohibit married women's employment. But many persons, even those who dislike the employment of married women, think that when a woman is left a widow, the best thing is to take her children away from her and get her into service.[1] In point of fact, the young children of a widow need quite as much care and attention as those who have a father living; and neither a married woman nor a widow can give her children that care and attention if she is without the means of subsistence.

The pressure on widows to seek employment, whatever their home ties, is seen with tragic pathos even in the bald figures of the Census.

	Single.	Married.	Widowed.	Total.
Percentage of women and girls occupied	54·5	10·26	30·1	32·5

Although widows in the very nature of the case are older on an average than married women, although the whole tendency of modern industry is towards the employment of the young, yet the percentage of widows occupied is three times as great as the percentage of married who are occupied.

There are no short and easy paths to the solution of the difficulties of woman, but those who uphold such measures as the prohibition of employment to married women, are bound to consider, firstly, how the prohibition should be applied in cases where the male head of the family is not competent or sufficiently able-bodied

[1] The servant-keeping class often shows a tendency to regard social questions mainly from the point of view of maintaining the supply of domestic servants.

to support it ; secondly, whether the children of widows can flourish on neglect any better than the children who have a living father, and, if not, why it is more desirable for the widow than for the married woman to go to work outside her home and away from her children.

Conclusion.—The following points summarise the results obtained from a study of the statistics in regard to women, supplemented by facts of common knowledge. Women outnumber men, especially in later life. Not all women can marry. A large majority of girls and a small minority of adult women work for wages. A large majority of women marry some time or other. The majority of young women leave work when they marry. Some women depend upon their own exertions throughout life, and some of them have dependents. Some women, after being maintained for a period by their husbands, are forced again to seek work for wages ; and many of these have dependents.

CHAPTER IV.

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS.

Early Efforts at Organisation.—It is probably not worth while to spend a great deal of time in the endeavour to decide what part women played in the earlier developments of trade unionism, very little information being so far obtainable. It seems, however, not unlikely that some of the loose organisations of frame-work knitters, woollen weavers, etc., that existed in the eighteenth century and later, may have included women members, as the Manchester Small-Ware Weavers certainly did in 1756, and Professor Chapman tells us that women were among the members of the Manchester Spinners' Society of 1795. At Leicester there appears to have been an informal organisation of hand-spinners, called "the sisterhood," who in 1788 stirred up their male friends and acquaintances to riot as a demonstration against the newly introduced machines.[1] We find some women organised in the unions that sprang up after the repeal of the Anti-Combination Act in 1824. The West Riding Fancy Union was open to women as well as men, and although the General Association of Weavers in Scotland expressly excluded female apprentices from membership it added the proviso,

[1] See Appendix, p. 270.

"except those belonging to the weaver's own family."

In December the Lancashire Cotton Spinners called a conference at Ramsey, Isle of Man, to consider the question of a national organisation. The immediate motive of the conference was the failure of a disastrous six months' strike at Hyde, near Manchester, which convinced the leaders that no local unions could succeed against a combination of employers. At the Ramsey Conference, after nearly a week's discussion, it was agreed to establish a "Grand General Union of the United Kingdom," which was to be subject to an annual delegates' meeting and three national committees. The Union was to include all male spinners and piecers, the women and girls being urged to form separate organisations. The General Union lasted less than two years.[1]

A few years later, in 1833, an attempt which met with limited success was made by Glasgow spinners to procure the same rates of pay for women as for men, in spite of the masters' protest that the former did not turn out so much or so good a quality of work as the latter. No doubt the men's action was taken chiefly in their own interests. Many of the male operatives objected altogether to the employment of women as spinners and for a time hindered it in Glasgow, though shortly after the great strike of 1837 as many women were spinning there as men. In Manchester women were spinning in 1838, and, indeed, had done so from early times. One regrets to note that they acted as strike-breakers (along with five out of thirty-three male spinners) in a mill belonging to Mr. Houldsworth, as the latter reported in evidence to the Com-

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 104-5.

mittee on Combinations of Workmen. A representative of the Spinners' Association, Glasgow, J. M'Nish, gave some rather interesting evidence before the same Committee. He said it was not the object of the association that the employment of women should cease, although they were "not fond of seeing women at such a severe employment," but it was their object to prevent the women from being "paid at an under rate of wages, if possible." Although the women spinners were not members of the association, they were in the habit of appealing to it for advice in the complicated business of reckoning up their rates of pay, and the association had occasionally advised them to strike for an advance.[1]

Some years later women were to be found among the members of the Spinners' Unions in Lancashire. Objections were raised to their employment on the grounds of health and decency, as the spinning-rooms were excessively hot and work had to be done in the lightest possible attire. Probably the strongest objection was the danger to wages and to the customary standard of life through women's employment. The feeling was that women would not resist the encroachment of the masters, that their customary wage was low, and that many of them were partially supported at home, consequently that when men and women were employed together on the same kind of work, the wages of men must fall. The hand-loom weavers of Glasgow would not admit adult women to their society, though many were in fact working; and the warpers discouraged women warpers. In 1833, however, the Glasgow women power-loom weavers are said

[1] *Parliamentary Papers*, 1838, viii. *qq.* 360, 1341-2.

to have had a union under the direction of the male operatives.[1]

The great outburst of unionism in 1833–34 fostered by Owen, the formation of a "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union" did not leave the women untouched. A delegates' meeting was held in February 1834 at which it was resolved that the new body should take the form of a federation of separate trade lodges, usually of members of one trade, but with provision for "miscellaneous lodges," in places where the numbers were small, and even for "female miscellaneous lodges." Within a few weeks or months this union obtained an extraordinary growth and expansion. About half a million members must have joined, including tens of thousands of farm labourers and women, and members of the most diverse and heterogeneous classes of industry. Among the women members we hear of lodges for tailoresses, milliners and miscellaneous workers. Some women gardeners and others were prominent in riots at Oldham. At Derby women and children joined with the men in refusing to abandon the union and were locked out by their employers. The Grand National endeavoured to find means to support them and find employment, but the struggle, though protracted for months, ended in the complete triumph of the employers. The Grand National did not long survive.

In some of the strikes and disturbances that took place in the following years there is clear evidence that women took part, but very little can be ascertained as to their inclusion in unions beyond the bare fact that the Cotton Power-Loom Weavers' Union, as is

[1] "Select Committee on Manufactures," *Parliamentary Papers*, 1833, vol. vi. p. 323, *q.* 5412-3.

generally stated, has always had women members. In cotton weaving the skill of women is almost equal to men's, in some cases even superior; and as the power-loom came more and more into use, women were more and more employed, as we have seen. The men had thus in their industry an object lesson of the desirability of association and combination in the interests of both sexes. A Weavers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1840 on the occasion of the Stockport strike. But the establishment of unions on a sound basis was a little later, about the middle of the century.

Cotton Weavers.—Numerous strikes occurred in Lancashire about the middle of the nineteenth century, and several unions of cotton weavers formed in those years are still in existence. The first sound organisation of power-loom weavers was established at Blackburn in 1854, but the Padiham Society and the Radcliffe Society can trace their existence back to 1850. The organisation of cotton weavers thenceforward proceeded rapidly. The Chorley weavers date from 1855, the Accrington Society from 1856, Darwen and Ramsbottom from 1857, Preston, 1858, Great Harwood and Oldham and District, 1859. The East Lancashire Amalgamated Society was also formed in 1859, and was afterwards known as the North-East Lancashire Amalgamated Society.

For many years, however, contributions were too small to admit of forming an adequate reserve, and before 1878 the unions were not really effective. A number of local strikes about that date led the Union officials to perceive that higher contributions were necessary for concerted action, and cases of victimising of officials brought home the need for larger Unions

with officials who could be placed beyond the risk of victimisation. The new demands made upon the workers no doubt caused some dismay. Some members were lost at first, but most of these returned after a few months. In course of time the weavers have built up an organisation which as far as women are concerned is without parallel in this country.

The Weavers' Amalgamation was formed in 1884. It includes 38 districts in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and one or two in Derbyshire, with nearly 200,000 members, the majority being women. In one or two districts political forces have favoured the growth of rival Unions outside the Amalgamation, and these also include a large proportion of women. This division in the weavers' camp is greatly to be regretted, but the rival societies do not appear so far to have done any great harm to the great Amalgamation, whose lead they usually follow, save in political matters, and from whose influence they, of course, indirectly benefit considerably, though they pay no contributions to its funds.

Piece rates in textile trades are extremely complicated. The lists and exceptions are indeed so technical in their nature that many of the operatives themselves do not understand them, and it is quite possible that some employers do not fully grasp the working of the lists.

The weaving operation begins when the warp, or the longitudinal threads of the piece to be woven, has been fixed in position on the loom. The threads used for the warp are what in spinning are called "twist." These long threads, or "ends" as they are sometimes called, when placed on the loom pass through the openings of the "reed," a sheet of metal cut like a

comb into spaces of the width required for the special coarseness or fineness of the material to be woven. The twist also passes through loops known as " healds." Thus the first element to be taken into account is the thickness of the threads of the warp, the number of threads going to make up an inch of width, and the total width of the piece to be woven. The work of the loom is to throw across the warp the cross threads or " weft." These threads are carried in the shuttle which flies to and fro and passes over and under the warp threads alternately, or at such angles and intervals as are provided for by the arrangement of the warp in the " healds " and " reed." The weft or cross threads are termed " picks." Thus the second element in determining the price is the fineness and closeness of the weft. The fineness is determined by the number of counts of the yarn. The closeness may be determined by counting the number of threads or picks in a given length actually woven, or by a calculation based upon the mechanical action of the machine. In many cases the number of picks can be easily settled by counting, but in almost every instance the most exact method is by calculation, based upon the sizes and divisions of the wheels and of the " beam " in the loom. The " beam " is the bar or pole round which the cloth is rolled in process of weaving. The third element is the total length woven, and a fourth is the nature and quality of the material used. This latter is an especially important element in price. The smaller the openings in the " reed " through which the threads pass, the finer and closer the crossing of the weft, the greater in number and more delicate are the threads to be watched by the weaver, and the greater is the liability to breakage of threads. Closer attention

and greater dexterity are needed in the weaving of fine than of coarse materials, but on the other hand the weaving of the coarser yarns may mean harder physical labour though not requiring so much skill. The harder work is paid for at an increased rate, though less wages may be earned by the operative.

The weavers' work is to fetch the cops of weft (unless they have tenters or assistants to do the fetching and carrying), keep the shuttles full, and repair broken threads. The standard upon which the uniform list is based is calculated on the capacity of an ordinary loom, forty-five inches in the reed space, weaving according to certain particulars given in the list, which are somewhat too technical to set down here. The standard conditions are in practice varied in every conceivable way, and exceptions of every kind have to be provided for by making additions and deductions per cent. There are also subsidiary lists for special kinds and qualities, and local lists for special characters of goods made in certain districts. To find the price of weaving the various allowances have to be deducted or added one by one. A minute fraction of a penny per yard may make a perceptible difference in a weaver's earnings.

These lists are a comparatively modern development, and date from the time of the labour troubles mentioned above. In 1853 the Blackburn Society prepared a list of uniform prices for weavers as a basis for a permanent agreement. This list was based upon prices previously paid at the various mills in the town, on an average of a month's earnings. The Blackburn list was in operation till 1892, and was the most important of all the lists regulating weavers' wages. It was then, with many others, replaced by the uniform list, which is now generally recognised throughout

Lancashire, but rates for some subsidiary processes are still regulated by local lists.

The complication of these lists has necessitated a high degree of specialised skill in the secretaries, who must possess practical and intimate experience of the work and a competent knowledge of arithmetic for elaborate calculations. Subjects of complaint and suspected miscalculations can be referred to the secretary, who immediately inquires into the matter. If he considers the complaint justified or the calculations incorrect, he visits the mill and puts the case before the employer. The matter can very likely be settled amicably, as in point of fact these matters often are, but if dispute occurs, it is referred first to the local association, and may be settled by negotiation. In case of failure there is a machinery needless to detail here by which meetings of employer and employed can be arranged through successively higher grades of representative authority, until in the last resort, if all attempts at settlement fail, a strike is called. The impressive feature about all this negotiation from our present point of view is that the whole strength of the Union, the brains and time and care of the secretary, can be invoked for the protection of the woman, the youthful or childish worker, as much as for the adult skilled worker at a craft.

Cases of wrongful withholding of earnings, as for instance unfair fines, can be taken into the County Courts. In at least one district the secretary has successfully asserted the right to visit the mill and inspect cloth, when the employer claims deductions. The cotton weavers' secretaries have in fact to play a part not unlike that of the solicitor in other social grades. They have to look after their clients' interests,

protect them from fraud and injury, and advise them in cases of doubt as to their legal rights and position.

A fertile source of trouble is in bad cotton. Most of us have probably laughed over the story of the pious weaver in the cotton famine who prayed for supplies of raw material, "but, O Lord, not Surats!" The matter is far from amusing to the workers themselves. Every breakage of a thread means that their wages are stopped by so much, and defective material means that they have to work harder and with more harass and interruption, and accomplish less in the time. If inferior material is persistently supplied, the cotton-workers consider themselves entitled to an increase of 5 per cent or $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on earnings, and it is the secretaries' duty to get it for them.

It is perhaps worth while to note the peculiar sense given in Lancashire speech to the expression "bad work." In Lancashire "bad work" means bad cotton, and is actually so used in the terms of an agreement between employer and employed as a subject for compensation to the worker.

Constant anxious care is needed to safeguard the payment of wages. A Weavers' Local Association advises their members that "whenever the earned wages of a female or young person is being detained for being absent or leaving work, except to the amount of damage their employer has sustained in consequence, such a young person should at once lay their case before the Committee."[1] Even at the present time it is not unknown for a girl to be fined to the amount of a whole week's earnings, but, as my informant added, such a case is now rare. As a rule the Trade Union Secretary

[1] *Rules of the Nelson and District Power-Loom Weavers' Association*, 1904, p. 13, "Advice to Members, etc."

will be appealed to, will take the steps necessary, and the fine will be returned or considerably reduced.

Any one who is used to considering the case of the girl and women worker in the unorganised trades of London or other great towns, any one who has read in the Women Factory Inspectors' Reports of the difficulty of enforcing the Truck Act and of the special proneness of the woman worker to be oppressed and cheated out of what is morally or even legally her due, will appreciate at once the extraordinary difference between her position and that of the cotton weaver who is backed up by her Association, and has an expert adviser to appeal to.

The position of women (and of course of other members also) has been greatly improved since the early days of power-loom weaving by the greater financial strength and security of the Unions. The history of the Burnley weavers is instructive on this point. The Union dates from about 1870, and started with a few hundred members on penny contributions. Numbers, however, increased, in spite of some troubles and persecution from individuals of the employing class. In 1878, Lancashire, as we have seen, was involved in a great industrial struggle. The Burnley Society, on its penny contributions, was unable adequately to sustain its members through the crisis, and only survived the crisis after a very severe strain. It was decided to adopt a sliding scale of payments and higher contributions, with the result that a good reserve was established, and benefits were granted on a higher scale. Considerable sums are paid not only in this, but in other Unions for breakdown or stoppage of work from various causes, such as fire, accident, or failure of trade, stoppage of machinery for repairs,

dissolution of partnership, etc. The weavers give benefit to members losing work through scarcity of cotton, or waiting for wefts or warps. Whether it is altogether wise from the tactical point of view for trade associations to devote so much of their funds to provident purposes of this nature is not a question I propose to discuss ; the relevant point is the economic security given to the worker. The following shows the contributions graded according to benefit, and the benefit accruing either for strikes brought on by the Society's action, or for stoppage of work at the mill.

CHORLEY WEAVERS.

Weekly Payments.	Benefits.
1d. per week (Tenters).	1/6 per week.
3d. ,,	7/6 ,,
4d. ,,	11/ ,,
5d. ,,	13/6 ,,
6d. ,,	16/ ,,

The Weavers' Unions do not, as a rule, pay sick or maternity benefit save under the Insurance Act. On the other hand, funeral benefit appears to be the invariable custom, and disablement through accident also entitles members to benefit. A penny per member per week is paid to the Amalgamation towards a Central Strike Fund, the remainder of the contributions being in the hands of the local branch.

The unusual strength of this Union, combining men and women in a single organisation, seems to be due in the first place to the increasing local concentration of the industry. In towns where many large mills are placed near together the ease and rapidity with which a secretary can call a meeting is surprising. In the

second place, it must be remembered that the organisation of women has been of great importance to the men, the women forming the majority of the workers. It has been worth the men's while to consider the women, and so far at least as the economic position is concerned, they have done it with considerable effectiveness. The organisation is utterly dependent on the membership and solidarity of women, and it has successfully safeguarded their economic interests, but it has been built up mainly by the initiative and under the control of a minority of men.

As a general rule, in spite of the exceptional success of the Weavers' Unions in retaining the continued membership of women, the fact remains that it is still unusual for women to be actively interested in the work of organisation. As a general rule the women rarely attend meetings unless they have a special grievance to be removed, and they seldom nominate one of themselves for the Committee. There are places where no woman has ever been nominated at all. This is a subject of regret and surprise, not only to the secretaries, but to those women here and there who are themselves keenly interested. These would fain see women representatives on the Committee, and some proportion of women acting as secretaries and collectors. Such women feel strongly that " we need the two points of view," and it is disheartening and incomprehensible to them to find that they cannot get their women friends to turn up at meetings and support the nomination of a woman. There appears to be little ground for the supposition that men would object to share their Committee labours with women, and even if they did, it is obvious that in an industry where women predominate, the latter could have no difficulty in packing

the Committee with their own representatives. In all these weavers' Unions the women have precisely the same rights and privileges as men. All positions are open to women, and women command a majority of votes. It is not the men's fault that the management so often is mainly left in their hands.

If we enquire as to the reasons for this apathy among women-workers, a great many can be given. One is the danger of victimisation, which may fall very hardly on collectors and Committee members. Another is the fatigue of the long day in the mill, the natural desire for a little amusement, or the amount of house-work to be done. Lancashire women are "house-proud" to an extraordinary degree, and cannot be satisfied without a high standard of comfort in such matters as cleanliness, food, and furniture. All this means work, and though the high wages current in the cotton towns might seem to make it possible to pay for household help, such help is not very easy to come by. Domestic service has hitherto been demanded only by a limited class in the community, because very few outside that class could afford to pay for it. A highly paid industry like the cotton trade makes servants scarce, and anything like a general demand for domestic help on a broad democratic scale could not possibly be satisfied as things are now. Even help in washing is not easily had. So the Lancashire woman or girl contrives to work her ten hours in the mill, and come back to a second day's work in the evening, with such assistance as may be given by the older members of the family. Lancashire is really suffering from the service question in an acute form, so acute that it is taken for granted it cannot be answered. A surprising part of the matter is that a class of women

so intelligent, so industrious, and comparatively so well-paid, should not ere this have made a concerted demand for better labour-saving devices in their houses.

But after all the domestic difficulty does not explain the whole problem of woman's apathy and indifference in Trade Unions. Supposing the meeting occurs only once a quarter, as in some places, house-work cannot be an insuperable obstacle to attendance at such rare intervals. One weaver told me she had been " bread-winner, nurse, and cleaner " at home, and yet had found time to attend meetings. Probably the real explanation of the attitude of women generally towards the Union is to be found in their education and outlook. Lloyd Jones, in his life of Robert Owen, explained the failure of the early co-operative societies by the fact that at that time the working-class had no habit of association. The old forms had gone ; the new had been legally suppressed. Under the changed conditions of modern life the working-class has had to evolve a new set of social habits and a new code of social duty. The habit of association has developed more slowly among women than among men, because to some extent it does undeniably come in conflict with the traditional moralities of women. To a great many women the idea of home duty means duty within the home ; they are only beginning to find out by slow degrees that their home is largely dependent for its very existence on outside impersonal forces about which it is incumbent on the home-maker to know something, even if she has to go outside to get knowledge. The Weavers' Secretary, even in Lancashire, still finds that " females are a deal more arduous to organise than males " ; he supposes, because " they've been brought

up to be different." They cost more in collecting expenses, and the propensity of girls to get married, to leave work or change their occupation is a constant source of anxiety. "They are always on the move," and perpetual watchfulness is needed to enrol the young ones as they enter the mill. Tact and diplomacy are expended in inducing the women-workers to keep an eye on the younger members, to bring them in as early in their industrial careers as possible. Even such homely arguments as "it saves your money from stamps," are not disdained in the effort to persuade the women to use their own personal influence to keep the flame alive. Small commissions are given to a member of a Union who brings in a new member. But without commissions women do a good deal of recruiting in the mills. The Lancashire cotton Unions do not run themselves; their efficiency is very largely the result of constant watchfulness and patient effort on the part of the officials, backed up by the pluck, tenacity, and high standard of comfort of the Lancashire woman herself.

A strong feeling, however, is now arising that there is a need for organisation of women within the Union, to induce them to come out more, to take more pains to understand the civic machinery of life which so largely controls their work, their livelihood, and the possibilities of health and strength both for themselves and their children. There is always a splendid remnant in Lancashire who feel themselves to be citizens; but a more general movement seems now to be beginning. This movement is partly due to economic changes in the distribution of the industry. Some mills nowadays employ scarcely any men. Such are mills or sheds for ring-winding, cop-winding, reeling and beaming, occupa-

tions exclusively appropriated to women. In such mills there will be a man employed as overlooker, and a mechanic to repair or look after the machines, and there is or should be a man or strong lad to carry the "skips." But the industry itself is here carried on by women, and in such cases women often develop powers hitherto latent for undertaking the Committee work and management of the Union. The same thing happens in districts where the demand for male labour in other occupations is sufficiently urgent to draw men away from weaving altogether.

At Wigan the Committee is wholly staffed by women. At Stockport all but the president, secretary, and one member are women. At Oldham about half the Committee are women. In the largest centres of the industry things are moving more slowly. In one very large and important Union the first woman representative has recently been elected to the Committee. At Blackburn two places on the Committee are now appropriated to the winders and warpers, who are all women; this has the effect of reserving two places exclusively for women. Here also the practice obtains of appointing a worker in each mill as a representative of the Union, to keep the secretary in touch with what is going on, and about twenty women, chosen chiefly from the winders, now fill the post of mill representative. The Insurance Act also has had the indirect effect of bringing in a certain number of women as sick visitors or pay stewards. Women are thus gradually being drawn forward, with results that indicate that custom is to blame for their previous isolation, rather than any inherent incapacity or unwillingness on their part.

There is a good deal that men might do to meet the

women half-way. The secretary may regretfully remark that the women members make no use of the handsome institute and comfortable rooms that are at the disposal of all members of a Union, but the women complain privately that there is no room appropriated to their use. This is felt as a difficulty by women, while it is unnoticed and unconsidered by men. However heartily one may agree that men and women would be better for the opportunities of social intercourse such as an institute provides, however much one may wish to see women making use of its amenities yet, as a beginning, perhaps always, it would obviously be advisable to set apart for them a sitting-room of their own. Women would like to go in to look at the papers and so on, but are deterred by the idea that they are not expected, or not wanted, or that their appearance may cause surprise in the minds of their male colleagues. "They did stare a bit, but they weren't a bit disagreeable," one woman weaver remarked after having valiantly entered her own institute and read her own magazines. Pioneers may do these doughty deeds; the average young woman, even in Lancashire, is singularly shy in some ways, however much the reverse she may appear in others. There is no doubt that social life in England suffers from the unwholesome segregation of women from the affairs of the community. They are too much cut off from the interests of men, most of which ought rather to be the interests of human beings. The beginnings of better things are now being made, but comradeship and consideration on both sides are needed.

A movement for shorter hours is going on in the Cotton Operatives' Unions, and has been sympathetically regarded for many years by the Women Factory

Inspectors, who realise the intensity of the work in cotton factories as few outsiders can do. The actual operations of joining threads, removing cops, replacing shuttles and so forth are not in themselves very laborious. The strain occurs in the long hours the women are at work, most of them having to stand all the time, and the close attention that has to be given. Every broken thread means *pro tanto* a stoppage of wages, and eyes and fingers have to be constantly on the alert to see and do instantly what is necessary. All this time, in most cases, the women are on their feet; all this time, in many cases, breathing an unnaturally heated air, sickened by the disagreeable smell of the oil and size, the ceaseless din of machinery in their ears, dust and fluff continually ready to invade the system. In recent years the increased speed has enormously increased the strain of work. It would seem that here is a clear case for shorter hours by law, but strange to say in practice some women are found to be rather nervous about such a measure. I know one highly intelligent girl who fears that shorter hours may mean increased speed, and thinks that that would be "more than flesh and blood could bear." Others fear a loss in earnings. These fears, however, are not shared by all, and after considerable discussion with different persons, I incline to hope that they are not justified. It is, of course, true that in the cotton trade conditions are very different from those in certain trades where shorter hours have resulted in an actual increase of output. The machinery is of enormous value, and is already speeded up to such an extent that no great increase of output on the present machines seems possible or thinkable. On the other hand, there might quite possibly be a very much smaller deficit on shorter

hours than the uninitiated would expect. One result would probably be a greater regularity of output through the day. Girls will own that they literally cannot keep going all the time, that they are forced to relax at intervals, and they add ; " if we had shorter hours we should be able to work right through." There are masters who think the early morning hours' work is hardly worth the trouble. The Trade Union secretaries with many years' knowledge and experience of the working of the Factory Acts behind them, do not fear any permanent reduction of wages. A forty-eight hours' week, or an eight hours' day would quite likely result in diminished earnings for the first few weeks or months. But given time to work itself out, it would regularise production and tend to smooth out alternatives of " glut " and slack time. A second probable result would be some increase in piece rates, and the workers would in no wise be worse off. No doubt this change will meet with considerable resistance, but judging by past history, it will probably not cause any permanent injury to the interests of either labour or capital.

Winders.—Winding is the process of running the yarn off the spinner's cop on to a " winder's bobbin." There are two processes, " cop-winding " and " ring-winding," the latter being a comparatively new process. The winders, though included usually in the same unions with weavers, are far less strongly organised. Neither process has as yet a uniform list, but the cop-winders have lists which cover large areas. The ring-winders are still less protected, and as a result they are under-paid.

Increasing discontent among the winders at Blackburn lately caused a demand for direct representation

on the Committee. The position is curious, there being a woman winder and a warper now serving on the Committee while the weavers, a larger and better paid body of women, are represented only by men. Winding is said to be harder and worse paid than weaving, and "driving" has been introduced in recent years. "If there is one operative who earns the money she receives it is the winder."[1] Nevertheless, there are some women who cannot stand the strain of weaving, and take to winding. Further enquiry into this apparent inconsistency elicited the fact that winding, although hard and monotonous work with its continual removing cops and joining threads, is in some ways a less continuous, unremitting strain than weaving.[2] Winders do not often work on Saturday morning, and they may occasionally have short intervals of rest. They also have the chance of promotion to be a warper, a post which admits of much more sitting down than either of the other two, and is consequently coveted.

The defective organisation of the winders appears to be due to the absence of men among the ranks. The close community of interests which produced the exceptional success of the Weavers' Union has been lacking, and the winders appear to have been overlooked. Faults in quality or mistakes made in the spinning-room are often credited to the winder, beamer or reeler. It is, however, constantly pointed out in the reports of the Amalgamation that they have the remedy in their own hands, and should organise more strongly to get the advantages enjoyed by the weavers. The recent awakening at Blackburn, indicated above,

[1] Report of N.C. Amalgamation, June 1906.
[2] Evidence is not unanimous on this point.

is a most hopeful sign. At Stockport also, the secretary is making a special effort to organise the winders, and at Padiham it has recently been proposed to give them special representation on the Committee as at Blackburn.

Card-room Operatives.—Unions of card- and blowing-room operatives began to accept women members about 1870, or a little later. Women are now organised in the same Union with men, and form about 90 per cent of the workers. The work forms part of the process of preparing cotton for spinning, and is heavy and dangerous in character. The conditions under which, and the purposes for which, benefit is granted resemble those of the weavers' Unions. The organisation of card-room operatives was greatly improved from 1885 to 1890 or 1894, and may be now considered to have reached a condition of comparative permanence and stability. The usual complaint is, however, made that women are apathetic and take little interest in Union affairs. This state of things is keenly regretted by the secretary, who would gladly see women members on the Committee. The difficulties in effective organisation of industries with so large a proportion of young and irresponsible workers are seen in a recent report of a card-room operatives' society. "Ring-room doffers are about the most difficult class we have to deal with in the matter of keeping them organised, and we can only assume, as most of them are young persons, that it is mostly their parents who are to blame for this apparent carelessness. So we appeal to the parents of this class of operative to take a keener interest in the welfare of those for whom they are responsible, and would remind them that the writer of this article well remembers the time when this class

of operative was looked upon as well paid at 5s. 2d. per week, while at the present time the lowest wage paid to our knowledge is 9s. 3d., an advance of 4s. 1d. per week. Surely the few coppers required could easily be spared from this advance, and the benefits returnable are as good an investment as it is possible to find."

Card-room operatives have usually been regarded as socially somewhat inferior to the weavers, the work being more arduous and done in more dangerous conditions and the women usually of a rougher class. It seems, however, probable that this condition is changing. Card-room work is becoming more popular as comparatively good wages come at an earlier age than in weaving. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of effective organisation to this class of workers. In its absence the large proportion of women can be taken advantage of to lower conditions of work all round. Closer co-operation with Unions of other classes of workers might be very useful, especially on the question of speeding up. The card-room operatives are speeded and "rushed," working under high pressure, and at the same time the winder, beamer and warper complain of bad cotton, and the weaver strikes on account of the same grievance. Surely the remedy is obvious.

Ring-spinners are often included in the same Union with card-room operatives, and quite recently a special effort has been made to improve the organisation of ring-room workers. A " universal list " was obtained in 1912.[1]

Other Workers.—Outside the cotton operatives there are a comparatively small number of women organised with men in Unions of varying strength and effective-

[1] Report of S.E. Lancashire Provincial Association, Dec. 1912.

ness. As regards linen and jute there is a Union at Dundee which includes over 5000 women, but appears to have made little progress in numbers in quite recent years. The secretary states that the majority of women in the jute trade have very little conception of what Trade Unionism really means, but that the same applies also to many of the men. He considers that the women's outlook has become broadened within recent years. There are some women now serving on the Committee, and the women generally are reported to take a " fair amount of interest " in the work of the society. The other Unions belonging to this industry are scattered over Ireland and Scotland.

Wool and worsted is backward in organisation, both for men and women. The Union at Huddersfield includes 4000 women, but a correspondent writes that the General Union, which has branches in all the important textile centres of the West Riding, in actual strength is scarcely one in ten of its possible membership. The apathy of the women, in the Huddersfield district at all events, cannot be due to poverty, for the subscriptions are low while the women's average wage is high. Nor is it due to the temporary nature of women's work, for in this district many continue work after marriage. The Yorkshire women are said by one correspondent to take little interest in public affairs in any way; by another, " not as much as they should, but more than they used to do. It's a big work organising and keeping women in. Marriage, flightiness, lack of vision, lack of help and encouragement from fathers and brothers all tend to make it hard. The lower the wages, the harder the task of making them into Unionists." The difficulty of organising them is great, and outside Huddersfield they are

extremely badly paid—so badly, indeed, that in our correspondent's opinion the trade needs to be scheduled under the Trade Boards Act. At Bradford considerable efforts have been made from time to time to get the women into the Union, but these have failed; and even during the last boom, due to the flourishing state of trade and to the Insurance Act, very little progress has been made.

The Clothing Unions are making rapid progress, including nearly 10,000 women in 1912, and the Trade Boards will assist the movement. In Leeds there has been some natural indignation at the low minimum fixed, which has impelled to organisation. The Unions follow the Lancashire pattern in organising women along with men. The standard rate for women in the Amalgamated Society of Clothiers operatives at Leeds is 4d. an hour, which is held to be achieved if the piece rates yield as much to 70 per cent of any section or grade of work. In the Boot and Shoe Unions a considerable percentage increase was registered for 1910 to 1912, and the numbers reached 8720 in the latter year.

Printing offers some of the most difficult problems connected with the organisation of women.[1] Men in these trades have undeniably offered serious obstacles to the inclusion of women. In 1886 a Conference of Typographical Societies of the United Kingdom and of the Continent, held in London, being "of the opinion that women are not physically capable of performing the duties of a compositor," resolved to recommend their admission to societies upon the same conditions

[1] See *Women in the Printing Trade* (edited by J. R. MacDonald) for an excellent study of the whole circumstances and conditions of the trade.

as journeymen, to be paid strictly the same rate. This resolution was adopted by the London Society of Compositors, and it became practically impossible for a woman to join the society, as women could not keep up to the standard and efficiency of men. One woman joined in 1892, but subsequently left. The women were practically excluded from the Compositors' Union by the fixing of equal rates of pay. This was not so much discrimination against women because they were women, as a demonstration against the black-leg competition of the unskilled against the skilled. It is stated that women compositors are regarded as so inferior to men that only among employers in a small way of business, working with small capital, where low wages constitute an advantage sufficient to counterpoise the lack of technical skill, can they find employment. In 1894 a militant Union of women was organised, and struck for increased wages and improved conditions, the women going out to show their sympathy with the men, who had been locked out. In recognition of the women's sympathy the men gave some help and support to this Union, which, however, after increasing to 350 began to decline. It was subsequently recognised as a branch of the Printers, Stationers, and Warehousemen.

In the cigar trade, as in printing, it has to be owned that women came in "not for doing more, but for asking less." Their labour was at first employed chiefly for the less skilled branches, a small number only being employed in skilled work; but in both divisions they worked for a lower rate than men. It was not until 1887 that a Union for women was established. They still, unfortunately, continued to undersell men, until at last the men, who at first were hostile to their

female competitors, saw that it was hopeless to try and keep them out, and that for their own sakes amalgamation was the wiser course. The adjustment of the wage-scale was a problem of some delicacy. To raise the scale of women's wages to the same as men's would probably have meant driving the women from the trade; to leave them on the lower scale would mean that women would contrive to undersell men. It was finally decided to take the highest existing rates of pay for women as the basis of the women's Union rates. After the Amalgamation had been achieved, women's wages rose 25 per cent, and the recognised policy of the Union was to make advantageous terms with each employer opening a new factory. Women are not, on the whole, such valuable workers as are men; they are slower, and often do not remain very long in the trade.[1] Lower rates of pay, as long as they are not permitted to fall indefinitely, are a distinct advantage to women in getting and keeping employment. The numbers in Unions in food and tobacco were only 2000 in 1910, and have since fallen slightly.

There are also a good many small Unions of women only, some of which are affiliated to the Women's Trade Union League. The numbers of women organised in the trades especially their own, such as dressmaking, the needle trades, and domestic work, are disappointingly small. It has to be remembered, however, that such occupations as these are still for the most part carried on either in the employers' or the workers' homes. The factory system has begun to make some way in dressmaking, but not to a considerable extent. It is not surprising that the workers in these industries

[1] G. Oakeshott, "Women in the Cigar Trade in London," in the *Economic Journal*, 1900, p. 562.

are behind the factory workers in learning the lesson of combination for mutual help and protection.

Unions in the lower grade industries, which till lately have been unorganised, will be treated in a later section.

The Women's Trade Union League.—The Society now known as the Women's Trade Union League was founded mainly by the efforts of a remarkable woman named Emma Smith, afterwards Mrs. Paterson (1848–1886). She was the daughter of a schoolmaster and became the wife of a cabinet-maker. Her life from the age of eighteen was devoted to endeavours on behalf of the working class and especially of women. Being a woman of natural ability and remarkable concentration of purpose, she succeeded in starting pioneer work of a difficult and unusual kind. She was secretary for five years to the Workmen's Club and Institute Union, and afterwards secretary to the Women's Suffrage Association. She was the first woman admitted to the Trade Union Congress, and attended its meetings from 1875 until 1886, with the exception only of one year, in which her husband's last illness prevented her attendance. Although the name of the League has been altered, and its policy considerably widened and in some measure modified, it is pleasant to note that it still keeps up a continuity of tradition with Mrs. Paterson's Protective and Provident League. Her portrait, as foundress, hangs upon the office wall, and the annual Reports are numbered continuously from the start in 1875.

Sick benefit was the main feature of the propaganda initiated by the League in its early years. The first society formed was for women employed in the printing trade. The need of a provident fund had been badly

felt by these women during a trade depression three years previously, and there was no provision for the admission of women as members of the men's societies, even if women's wages had been (as they were not) sufficient to pay the necessary subscription to the men's society. Mr. King, Secretary of the London Consolidated Society of Bookbinders, however, promised to support and assist the efforts to organise women in this trade. The appeal for a separate organisation of women met with a ready response. Some hundreds of women employed in folding, sewing, and other branches of the bookbinding trade, attended the first meeting, held in August 1875; a provisional committee was formed, and in October the society was formally established with a subscription of 2d. per week, and an entrance fee of 1s. Its history, however, was uneventful. It refused to join with men in making demands upon the employers, and its representatives at Trade Union Congresses and elsewhere were imbued with Mrs. Paterson's prejudice against the Factory Act, and resisted legal restrictions upon labour. Employers have been known to urge the formation of "a good women's Union," on the ground that the fair-minded employer was detrimentally affected by the "gross inequalities of price" that existed. The backwardness and narrow views of the Women's Union were resented by the men, and in the time of the eight hours agitation, 1891–1894, would not take part, and there was considerable ill-feeling between the two sections. This society was mainly a benefit club, and the same remark holds good of other early societies established by the Women's Protective and Provident League, which included societies for dressmakers, hat-makers, upholsterers, and shirt- and collar-makers. The foundress,

although a woman of unusual energy and initiative, whose efforts for the uplifting of women-workers should not be forgotten, was in some degree hampered by the narrow individualism characteristic of what may be designated as the Right Wing of the Women's Rights Movement. She was an opponent of factory legislation for grown women, and did not lead the Unions under her control to attempt any concerted measures for improving the conditions of their work. The first Report of the League indicates her attitude in the remarks which she reports (evidently with sympathy) from a Conference held in April 1875: "It was agreed" (viz. at this Conference) "that any further reduction of hours, if accompanied by a reduction of wages, *as it probably would be if brought about by legislation*, would be objectionable." (Italics added.) In the same Report (pp. 14-15) the writer, doubtless Mrs. Paterson herself, sums up the advantages to be obtained for women through union. The League is to be a "centre of combined efforts" to "improve the industrial and social position of . . . women"; it is "to acquire information which will enable friends of the working classes to give a more precise direction than at present to their offers of sympathy and help. *Without interfering with the natural course of trade*, the Societies will furnish machinery for regulating the supply of labour. . . ." (Italics added.) "The object of the League is to promote an *entente cordiale* between the labourer, the employer, and the consumer; and revision of the contract between the labourer and employer is only recommended in those cases in which its terms appear unreasonable and unjust to the dispassionate third party, who pays the final price for the manufactured goods and is certainly not interested in

adding artificially to their cost." No direct action for raising wages is suggested.

Delegates from three Women's Societies—shirt-makers, bookbinders, and upholsterers—were admitted to the 8th Annual Trade Union Congress, held at Glasgow, October 1875.[1] At the meeting of the T.U. Council in 1879, five women representing Unions were not only present but took an active part in the proceedings, successfully moving a resolution for additional factory inspectors, and for the appointment as such of women as well as men.

In 1877, the Amalgamated Society of Tailors having been asked by one of its branches to resist the increasing employment of women in that trade, resolved instead that the work of women should be recognised, and the women organised and properly paid. The League was asked to co-operate in forming a Union, and a Tailoresses' Union was subsequently formed. At Brighton a Union of Laundresses was formed. Various other societies were formed in these early years, many of which are now defunct.

Mrs. Paterson died in 1886, at the sadly early age of thirty-eight. During the years following, the policy of the League was enlarged and developed in a very considerable degree. Miss Clementina Black was secretary for a few years, and her second Report (1888) contains interesting remarks on the position of women: "All inquiry tends to show more and more that disorganised labour is absolutely helpless; good wages, lessened hours, better general conditions, and, on the whole, better workmanship prevail in the trades that are most completely organised. It also tends to show the injury done to men and women alike by the pay-

[1] Second Report of the W.T.U.L.

ment to women of unfairly low wages. . . . Even in employments in which the work can be done by women at least as well as by men, the wages of women are greatly inferior to those of men. And in those branches in which superior efficiency is shown by the male workers, the inferiority of the wages of the female employees is altogether out of proportion to the difference in the character of the work done by the two sexes. From this cause—the payment of unfairly low wages to women simply because they are women—arises a desire on the part of grasping employers to reduce the wage-standard by engaging women in preference to men, while in many cases the conditions of female employment are onerous and oppressive to an extent which involves the greatest danger to health."

In 1889 the representation of the Society of Women Bookbinders at the Trade Union Congress, held at Dundee, moved a resolution in favour of the appointment of women factory inspectors, which was adopted. In the same year, at the International Workers' Congress, held in Paris, the representative of the London Women's Trade Council, Miss Edith Simcox, moved the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted by the representatives of all nationalities: "That the Workmen's Party in all countries should pledge itself to promote the formation of trade organisations among the workers of both sexes."

The policy of the League in regard to legislation was broadened. The protection of women through the instrumentality of the Factory Act was no longer resisted, but was recognised as a powerful force for good, to be aided in its administration and developed whenever possible. The League also indicated by the adoption of the title "Trade Union League," and by

gradually dropping the former style, " Protective and Provident," that it was inaugurating a more active policy. As a matter of tactics the League officials when appealed to for help in labour difficulties among women-workers, always endeavour *first* to get the matter settled by negotiation ; but direct action is now by no means excluded from their programme, and strikes have been called in recent years, sometimes with considerable success.

The W.T.U.L. is not a Union : it has no strike fund and pays no benefits. It is an organisation to promote, foster, and develop the formation of Unions among women. Any Union of women, or Union in which women members are enrolled, can be affiliated to the W.T.U.L. All secretaries of affiliated London Unions are *ex-officio* members of the League Committee, on which also are a certain number of members elected at the Annual Meeting. The W.T.U.L. also enjoys the services of an Advisory Committee of leading Trade Unionists, who are present at the Annual Meeting.

The officials of the League are a Chairman, a Secretary, two Official Organisers, and an Honorary Treasurer. The League acts as the agent of women Trade Unionists in making representations to Government authorities or Parliamentary Committees in regard to the legislation required. Abuses or grievances in particular industries are brought forward in the House of Commons by members who are in touch with the League. Complaints of breaches of the Factory and Workshop Acts can be sent to the League, and are investigated by its officials and forwarded to the proper department. A legal advice department also forms part of the League's functions, and deals with such matters as the assessment of compensation, disputes

with Insurance Companies, deductions from wages, non-payment of wages, wrongful dismissal, claims for wages in lieu of notice, and such cases. A few instances, culled from recent Reports, will give an idea of the range and complexity of these cases.

A worker in a sweet-factory was injured by the strap of the motor falling on her head, and suffered from shock and chorea. The employers were foreign, and it was with special difficulty that they were got to admit that the accident had even happened. Being threatened with proceedings, the matter was referred to their Insurance Company, who eventually paid the full wages during incapacity.

In the slack season seven dressmakers' hands, some of whom had been three years in employment, were dismissed without notice. The League's adviser applied for a week's wage in lieu of notice for each worker. After some correspondence the money owing was handed over. This last case is a sample of many similar ones, and points to the urgent need of organisation in the dressmaking trade.

A syrup boiler in a jam-factory slipped on the boards which, owing to imperfect drainage, were slippery with syrup, and fractured her left arm. Compensation was paid at the rate of 5s. 6d. a week.

The League has always been singularly successful in attracting the sympathy, interest, and service of able and gifted helpers, both men and women. It has been also happy in securing active co-operation with many Trade Unions, and also with societies such as the British Section of the International Association for Labour Legislation, and the Anti-Sweating League, with both of which it is closely connected in work and sympathy. No less than 170 societies—societies, that is to say,

constituted wholly or partly of women members—are now affiliated to the League. The most recent activities of the League have been a campaign of instruction and organisation to explain the provisions of the Insurance Act, and a special effort of propaganda and organisation among the workers in some of the low-grade and ill-paid industries now coming under the Trade Boards Act.

A comparison of the list of affiliated societies now appended to the League's Report with the societies first enrolled shows not only, as would be expected, a considerable widening of the field, but also a change in character. Whereas the societies first formed were of women only, and in London, nearly all the societies at present enrolled are mixed, and most of them are not London societies at all. The great textile societies, the weavers, winders, beamers, twisters, and drawers, card-room operatives, and so forth, form the great majority of organised women ; and in these, women are organised either together with, or in close connection with, men. Some of the largest are many years older than the League, but have affiliated in comparatively recent years. There are also a vast number of Unions of miscellaneous trades—tobacco, food, tailoring, etc.; and even societies mainly masculine are affiliated, such as the London Dock and General Workers' Union (including sixty women in 1910). Many Trade Unions consisting wholly of men make donations to the League as a recognition of the importance of its work in organising women.

In Manchester there are two societies to promote the organisation of women-workers, which are doing excellent educational work in fostering the habit or tradition of association among workers in miscellaneous

trades, many of which are totally unorganised and grievously underpaid. If we compare these Manchester societies with the policy of the Women's Trade Union League in London, a certain difference of outlook is perceptible. The Manchester societies prefer organising women by and for themselves ; the Women's Trade Union League is in touch with the larger Labour Movement and favours joint organisation wherever possible.

The Movement among Unorganised Workers.—The "New Unionism for Women," if we may so term it, first attracted public attention in July 1888, when a few scattered paragraphs found their way even into the dignified columns of the *Times*. There was a strike among the match-girls in the East End. Meetings were held, and next came the inevitable letters from the employers, representing the admirable condition of their factory, the desire of terrorised workers to return to work, the responsibility of "agitators" for the strike. Then a small Committee of Inquiry was started, its headquarters being at Toynbee Hall, and this Committee reported that it found the girls' complaints to be largely justified. The piece rates had been cut down on the introduction of machinery more than in proportion to the saving of labour per unit produced. Vexatious charges for brushes and excessive fines were imposed without reckoning or explanation. The wages ranged upwards from 4s.—4s. to 6s. predominantly—and never exceeded 13s.

Such were the charges, among others which were considered to be substantiated by the investigations of the four social workers, who showed their impartiality by the careful letter in which they reproduced the explanations and defence of the employers. The Toynbee Hall Committee in its third letter charac-

terised the relation of employer and employed in this factory to be deplorable, and the wages paid as so small as to be insufficient to maintain a decent existence.

On the 16th, the *Times* had a small paragraph describing the strike as being "the result of the class-war which the body of Socialists have brought into action." Subsequently the London Trades Council took up the match-girls' cause, distributed strike pay to the amount of £150 among 650 boys, girls, and women, and formed a Committee of the girls to co-operate with the London Trades Council. The employers agreed to receive a deputation.

On Wednesday 18th July, the strike was declared to be at an end, after the meeting of the first deputation from the L.T.C. and the match-girls' representatives with the directors. The directors agreed to abolish fines and the deductions complained of, to recognise an organised Trade Union among the employees in order that grievances might be represented straight to the heads instead of through the foreman, and to reinstate the workers concerned in the strike. The extraordinary success of this strike appears to have been due to the unusual steadiness and unity of the girls themselves, to the able and tactful generalship of Mrs. Besant, and largely also, of course, to the support of the London Trades Council.

As a result of this strike a Match-makers' Union was formed, and seems to have lasted until 1903; but it subsequently disappears from the Women's Trade Union League Reports, and is known no more.

About the time of the great Dock Strike, 1889, a concerted effort to organise East End women-workers was made by Miss Clementina Black, Mrs. Amie Hicks, and Miss Clara James. Mrs. Hicks had been in the

habit of meeting some of the women rope-makers in connexion with the parochial work of St. Augustine's Church, and had observed that many of them had bandaged hands and were suffering from injuries resulting from machinery accidents. Inquiries made by her brought to light the fact that the women's wages were only about 8s. to 10s. Disputes were frequent in the trade. Mrs. Hicks determined to open her campaign of organisation with the rope-makers, although she was warned that she would find them a rough, wild and even desperate class of women. Nothing daunted, she called on several, and invited them to a meeting. The supposed viragos said they were afraid, and Mrs. Hicks advised them to come all together. A room was hired, and about 90 to 100 women walked there in a body, a proceeding which greatly alarmed the inhabitants, some of whom fled into their houses and barred the doors. The meeting, however was successful. Nearly all the women signed their names as members of a Union, and Mrs. Hicks became their secretary, a post which she retained for ten years. It is recorded that not one of the original members was lost to the Union otherwise than by death, and that not one of them ever " said a rough word " to their secretary.

Mrs. Hicks and Miss James, after making urgent representations, were admitted to give evidence before the Labour Commission, which apparently had not originally contemplated hearing women witnesses at all. Mrs. Hicks was able to show that the conditions of the work were most unhealthy, the air being full of dust, and no appliance provided to lay it. In some works even elementary sanitary requirements were not provided. Cases were known of the women being locked in the factory,

and in at least one instance a fire occurred which was fatal to the unfortunate women locked in. In spite of these shocking conditions, however, many women refused to join the Union for fear of victimisation and dismissal. As Mrs. Hicks put it, the condition of the women was so bad in East London that an employer had only to say he wanted some work done, fix his own rate of pay, and he would always find women glad to take it.

Miss Clara James also gave evidence in regard to the Confectioners' Trade Union. The Union was very weak in numbers, the women being afraid to join, several, including the witness, having been dismissed for joining a Union. In one factory six girls who had acted as collectors for the Union were dismissed one after another, although the Union had never acted offensively or used threats to the employer. In this trade the workers were subjected to very bad sanitary conditions, rotting fruit, syrup, etc., being left a week or more in proximity to the workrooms. Wages were stated at from 7s. to 9s., 12s. being the highest and very unusual, but even these low rates were subject to deductions and fines, and workers might be dismissed without notice. In both these trades it will be evident at once that the great need for women workers was to combine and stand together, but owing to their poverty and dread of dismissal this was precisely what it was most difficult for them to do. The frequent disputes mentioned by both witnesses are, however, a sign that the traditional docility of the woman-worker was even then beginning to give place to a more militant spirit.

In other industries there have been many signs of activity in more recent years. In October 1906 the ammunition workers at Edmonton struck against a

reduction of wages, and the matter being referred to arbitration, was compromised in a manner fairly favourable to the workers, and other concessions were subsequently secured. A Union was formed as a branch of the National Federation of Women Workers, and this Union is still in active existence. Members are entitled to strike pay and also have a sick benefit fund in addition to the Insurance Act benefit, and a thrift section. The secretary is a convinced believer in the value of organisation to women, and thinks that women are beginning to appreciate it themselves far more than formerly.

In 1907 Miss Macarthur succeeded in reorganising the Cradley Heath chain-makers, whose Union, always feeble, had all but flickered out. The making of small chains is an industry largely carried on by women in homes or tiny workshops, and although the district does an enormous trade in the world market, this had not prevented the local industry becoming almost a proverb for sweating. The reorganisation of the Union, however, was effected in the nick of time. The society was affiliated to the National Federation of Women Workers, an association which has been formed in co-operation with the W.T.U.L., to bring together the women in those industries where no organisation already exists for them to join.

In 1909 the Trade Boards Act was passed, and the making of small chains was one of the group of sweated trades first included under the Act. The organisation which had already been started was now of great service in facilitating the administration of the Act, the Women's Union being able to choose the persons who should represent it on the Board. Subsequently when the Board of Trade called a meeting to elect

workers' representatives, the candidates chosen by the Union were voted for by the women with practical unanimity, and as the work of the Board progressed it was possible at each stage to consult the workers and obtain their approval for the action taken by their representatives in their name. In the absence of effective organisation this would have been much more difficult.

The history of the first determination of the chain-makers' Board forms one of the most singular passages in industrial history. The Board, constituted half of employers and half of employed, having got to work, found itself compelled to fix a minimum wage which amounted to an increase in many cases of 100 per cent, or even more. The previous wages had been about 5s. or 6s., and the minimum wages per week, after allowing for necessary outlay on forge and fuel, was fixed at 11s. 3d. Poor enough, we may say. But so great an improvement was this to the workers themselves that their comment is said to have been: "It is too good to be true." The change did not take effect without considerable difficulties. The Trade Boards Act provides that three months' notice of the prices fixed by the Board shall be given, during which period complaints and objections may be made either by workers or employers. At Cradley this waiting period was abused by some of the employers to a considerable extent. Many of them began to make chains for stock, and trade being dull at the time they were able to accumulate heavy reserves. Thus the workers were faced with the probability of a period of unemployment and starvation, in addition to which a number of employers issued agreements which they asked the women to sign, contracting out of the minimum wage for a further period of six months.

This was not contrary to the letter of the law, but was terribly bitter to the poor workers, whose hopes, so near fulfilment, seemed likely again to be long postponed. They came out on strike, and were supported by the National Federation of Women Workers, in conjunction with the Trade Union League and the Anti-Sweating League. A meeting was arranged between the workers' representatives and the Manufacturers' Association, at which the latter body undertook to recommend its members to pay the minimum rate so long as the workers continued financial support to those women who refused to work for less than the rates. This practically of course amounted to a request from the employers that the workers' Trade Union should protect them against non-associated employees. It has been remarked that this agreement is probably unique in the annals of Trade Unionism.

After long consideration the workers agreed. An appeal for support was made to the public, and met with so good a response that the women were able to fight to a finish and returned to work victorious. Every employer in the district finally signed the white list, and more recently the Board has been able to improve upon its first award. The organisation has so far been maintained. Thus a real improvement has been achieved in the conditions of one of the most interesting, even picturesque of our industries, though unfortunately also one of the most down-trodden and oppressed.

No one who has ever visited Cradley can forget it. The impression produced is ineffaceable. So much grime and dirt set in the midst of beautiful moors and hills —so much human skill and industry left neglected, despised and underpaid. The small chains are made

by women who work in tiny sheds, sometimes alone, sometimes with two or three others. Each is equipped with a bellows on the left of the forge, worked by the left hand, a forge, anvil, hammer, pincers, and one or two other tools. The chains are forged link by link by sheer manual skill; there is no mechanical aid whatever, and we understand that machines for chain-making have been tried, but have never yet been successful. The operation is extremely ingenious and dextrous, and where the women keep to the lighter kind of chains there would be little objection to the work, if done for reasonable hours and good pay. It is carried on under shelter, almost in the open air, and is by no means as drearily monotonous as many kinds of factory work. On the other hand, in practice the women are often liable to do work too heavy for them, and the children are said to run serious risks of injury by fire.

At the time of the present writer's visit, now about ten years ago, these poor women were paid on an average about 5s. 6d. a week, and were working long hours to get their necessary food. Most have achieved considerable increases under the combined influence of organisation and the Trade Board, and probably 11s. or 12s. is now about the average, while some are getting half as much again. When the strike was over there was a substantial remainder left over from the money subscribed to help the strikers. The chain-makers did not divide the money among themselves, but built a workers' Institute. Surely the dawn of such a spirit as this in the minds of these hard-pressed people is something for England to be proud of.

In August 1911 came a great uprising of underpaid workers, and among them the women. The events of that month are still fresh in our memories; perhaps

their full significance will only be seen when the history of these crowded years comes to be written. The tropical heat and sunshine of that summer seemed to evoke new hopes and new desires in a class of workers usually only too well described as " cheap and docile." The strike of transport workers set going a movement which caught even the women. In Bermondsey almost every factory employing women was emptied. Fifteen thousand women came out spontaneously, and the National Federation of Women Workers had the busiest fortnight known in its whole history of seven years.

Among the industries thus unwontedly disturbed were the jam-making, confectionery, capsule-making, tin box-making, cocoa-making, and some others. In some of the factories the lives led by these girls are almost indescribable. Many of them work ten and a half hours a day, pushed and urged to utmost speed, carrying caldrons of boiling jam on slippery floors, standing five hours at a time, and all this often for about 8s. a week, out of which at least 6s. would be necessary for board and lodging and fares. Most of them regarded the conditions of their lives as in the main perfectly inevitable, came out on strike to ask only 6d. or 1s. more wages and a quarter of an hour for tea, and could not formulate any more ambitious demands. An appeal for public support was issued, and met with a satisfactory response. The strike in several instances had an even surprisingly good result. In one factory wages were raised from 11s. to 13s.; in others there was 1s. rise all round; in others of 2s. or 2s. 6d., even in some cases of 4s. In one case a graduated scale with a fixed minimum of 4s. 7d. for beginners at fourteen years old, increasing

up to 12s. 4d. at eighteen, was arranged. One may hope that the moral effect of such an uprising is not wholly lost, even if the resulting organisations are not stable; the employer has had his reminder, as a satirical observer said in August 1911, "of the importance of labour as a factor in production."

Many women were enrolled in new branches of the National Federation of Women Workers. Not all of these branches survive, but there was some revival of Unionism in the winter, 1913–14, and many of the workers who struck in 1911 will be included under the new Trade Boards.

Perhaps even more remarkable was the prolonged strike of the hollow-ware workers in 1912. Hollow-ware, it may not be superfluous to remark, is the making and enamelling of tin vessels of various kinds. This was once a trade in which British makers held the continental markets almost without rivalry; it was then chiefly confined to Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and Bilston. But small masters moved out into the country in search of cheaper labour, and settled themselves at Lye and Cradley, outside the area protected by the men's Unions. In 1906 the Unions endeavoured to improve conditions for the underpaid workers, and drew up a piece-work list of minimum rates applicable to all the centres of the trade. But they had not strength to fight for the list, and wages went down and down. As one consequence, the quality of the work had deteriorated, shoddy goods were sent abroad, and foreign competitors improved upon them.[1] This in

[1] In Mr. Keighley Snowden's words, from which this account is taken (*Daily Citizen*, 12, xi. 1912): "If foreign competition at last threatens us, it is in consequence of this heartless folly."

turn was used as an excuse for further driving down wages. The hollow-ware trade, like chain manufacture, employs women as well as men. In 1912 many of these women were working for a penny an hour, tinkering and soldering buckets, kettles, pots and pans from early morning until night; at the week-end taking home 6s. for their living.

It should also be remembered that some processes, especially the making of bright frying-pans, entail serious risk of lead-poisoning. Galvanised buckets are dipped in baths of acid, and the fumes are almost blinding, and stop the breath of an unaccustomed visitor. The work done by women is hard enough. But they did not take much notice of the hardness or of the risk of industrial disease. Their preoccupation was a more serious one: how to get their bread. Wages were rarely more than 7s. a week, and in 1912 a considerate and attentive visitor found their minds concentrated on the great possibility of raising this to—12s.? 14s.? 15s.? What the hollow-ware workers of Lye and Cradley had set their minds on was merely 10s. a week, and to attain this comparative affluence they were ready to come out weeks and weeks on end. As a result of conferences between representatives of the National Federation of Women Workers and twenty of the principal employers, during the summer 1912, it was decided to demand a minimum wage of 10s. for a fifty-four-hour week. Not, of course, that the officials considered this a fair or adequate wage, but because they hoped it would give the women a starting-point from which they could advance in the future, and because, wretched as it seemed, it did in fact represent a considerable increase for some of the women.

The best employers yielded at once, but several refused to adopt the terms proposed. In October 840 men handed in their notices for a 10 per cent increase of wages and a fifty-four-hour week. Twelve firms conceded these terms at once, leaving 600 men still on strike against thirty-three firms. As a result many women-workers were asked to do men's work, and it seemed not unlikely that the men might be thus defeated. The National Federation of Women Workers decided to call out the women to demand a 10s. minimum, and at the same time support the men in their demands. All the women called out received strike benefit. There was, however, another body of women and girls, whose work stopped automatically because of the strike, and these were not entitled to any strike pay. A public appeal was therefore issued by the *Daily Citizen* and also by the Women's Trade Union League, and the response evoked was sufficient to tide the workers over the crisis. The struggle ended with complete victory for the workers, and as an indirect but most important result, the trade was scheduled for inclusion in the Revisional Order under the Trade Boards Act.

In the North also the last two or three years have witnessed increased activity in the organisation of underpaid trades. In the flax industry the strike of a few general labourers employed in a certain mill resulted in the locking out of 650 women flax-workers. Although the preparing and spinning of flax is a skilled industry, the highest wage paid in the mill to spinners was 11s. including bonus, reelers occasionally rising to 13s., and the common earnings of the other workers were from 7s. 6d. to 9s. Several small strikes had taken place, but the women being unorganised and

without funds were repeatedly compelled to return to work on the old terms. By the efforts of the Women's Trade Union Council of Manchester a Union was now formed, and a demand made for an increase of 2s. all round. With the help of public sympathy and financial support the women were able to stand out, and after a lock-out of nearly three weeks a settlement was arrived at under which the women got an increase of 1s. all round and the bonus was re-arranged more favourably for the workers. The whole of the women involved in this dispute joined the Union.

A dispute in another flax mill was much more prolonged, and lasted for over sixteen weeks. It was eventually arranged by the intervention of the Board of Trade, and some concessions were obtained by the workers. In both these disputes the men and women stood together. There is perhaps no feature so hopeful in this "new unionism" of women, as the fact that women are beginning to refuse to be used as the instruments for undercutting rates and injuring the position of men.

Many other such efforts might be recorded did space permit. Many of them do not unfortunately lead to stable forms of association. The difficulties are enormous, the danger of victimisation by the employers is great, and in the case of unskilled workers their places, as they know so well, are easily filled from outside. A correspondent writes to me that "fear is the root cause of lack of organisation." The odds against them are so great, the hindrances to organisation and solidarity so tremendous, that the instances recorded in which these low-grade workers do find heart to stand together, putting sex jealousy and sex rivalry behind them, disregarding their immediate needs

for the larger hope, are all the more significant. Several of the labourers' Unions now admit women, notably the Gas-Workers' and General Labourers' Union and the Workers' Union.

The National Federation of Women Workers.—The most important Union for women among the ill-defined, less skilled classes of workers is the National Federation of Women Workers, which owes its existence mainly to the initiative and fostering care of the Women's Trade Union League. The form of organisation preferred by the Women's Trade Union League in the twentieth century is that men and women should wherever possible organise together. This is the case with the firmly-established Lancashire weavers and card-room operatives and with the progressive Shop Assistants' Union. In the numerous trades, however, in which no Union for women exists, a new effort and a new rallying centre have been found necessary. The National Federation of Women Workers was formed in 1906 for the purpose of organising women in miscellaneous trades not already organised. It has made considerable progress in its few years of existence, and has a number of branches in provincial and suburban places. The National Federation is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress and to the General Federation of Trade Unions, and insured in this last for strike pay at the rate of 5s. per week per member. The branches are organised in different trades, have local committees and local autonomy to a certain extent. Each branch retains control of one-sixth of the member's entrance fee and contribution, together with any voluntary contributions that may be raised for its own purposes. The remainder of the funds go to a Central Management Fund from which all strike and lock-out money is

provided, and a Central Provident Fund. Branches may not strike without the permission of the Executive Council.

The National Federation of Women Workers has an Insurance Section in which about 22,000 women were enrolled in 1913. At the time of writing a special effort is being made for the organisation of women in those industries to which the Trade Boards Act has recently been extended.

Women's Unions in America.—In America women are fewer in numbers in the Trade Union movement, but they have occupied a more prominent place in it there than in our own country. The American labour movement may roughly be dated from the year 1825. In that year the tailoresses of New York formed a Union and went on strike, and from that time to the present women wage-earners have constantly formed Unions and agitated for better pay and conditions of work.

The first women to enter factory employment were native Americans, largely New England girls, the daughters of farmers, girls who would naturally be more independent and have a higher standard of comfort than the factory hand in old countries. Several important strikes occurred among the cotton-mill girls at Dover, New Hampshire, in 1828 and again in 1834, and also at Lowell in 1834 and 1836. It does not appear that these strikes resulted in any stable combinations.

Subsequently, between 1840 and 1860, a number of labour reform associations were organised, chiefly among textile mill girls, but including also representatives of various clothing trades. These societies organised a number of successful strikes, increased wages, shortened the working day, and also carried on

a successful agitation for protective legislation. The leader of the Lowell Union, Sarah Bagley, had worked for ten years in New England cotton mills. She was the most prominent woman labour leader of the period, and in 1845 became president of the Lowell Female Labour Reform Association, which succeeded in obtaining thousands of operatives' signatures to a petition for the ten hours' day.

The Female Industrial Association was organised in New York, 1845, a Union not confined to any one trade but including representatives from tailoresses, sempstresses, crimpers, book-folders and stitchers, etc. Between 1860 and 1880 local branches were formed and temporary advantages gained here and there by women cigar-makers, tailoresses and sempstresses, umbrella sewers, cap-makers, textile workers, laundresses and others. Women cigar-makers especially, who were at first brought into the trade in large numbers as strike breakers, after a struggle were organised either as members of men's Unions or in societies of their own, and once organised "were as faithful to the principles of unionism as men." The Umbrella Sewers' Union of New York gave Mrs. Paterson, then visiting America, the idea of starting the movement for women's Unions in London. The women shoemakers formed a national Union of their own, called the Daughters of St. Crispin.

In this period there was little organisation among the women of the textile mills, and the native American girls were to some extent ousted by immigrants having a lower standard of life. There were, however, a number of ill-organised strikes which for the most part failed.

In the war time the tailoresses and sempstresses,

already suffering the double pressure of long hours and low wages, had their condition aggravated by the competition of the wives and widows of soldiers, who, left alone and thrown into distress, were obliged to swell the market for sewing work as the nearest field for unskilled workers. Efforts, however, were made to form Trade Unions among the sewing women ; many of these were short-lived and unsuccessful. The growing tendency among men to realise the importance of organising women is seen in a resolution passed by a meeting of tailors in June 1865 :

> RESOLVED that each and every member will make every effort necessary to induce the female operatives of the trade to join this association, inasmuch as thereby the best protection is secured for workers as well as for the female operatives.

In 1869 the International Typographical Union admitted women to equal membership, after years of opposition, to the entrance of women into the printing trade.

In 1873 and onwards Trade Unionism among women, as among workers generally, suffered from the trade depression of those years. During this period, however, a number of eight-hour leagues were formed, both of men and women members, who found in the short-time idea a significant and vital measure of reform. The Boston League (1869) was the first to admit women. In this and other similar societies they served as officers and on committees.

A remarkable organisation of female weavers was formed in Fall River in January 1875. The Male Weavers' Union had voted to accept a reduction of 10 per cent ; but the women called a meeting of their

own, excluding all men excepting reporters, and voted to strike against the reduction. The male weavers, encouraged by their action, decided to join the movement. Three thousand two hundred and fifteen strikers, male and female, were supported by the Unions, and the strike was successful. Work was resumed late in March.

From 1880 the organisation of women again progressed in the labour movement of the Knights of Labour. For the first time in American Labour history women found themselves encouraged to line up with men on equal terms in a large general organisation. They could also form their own Unions in alliance with the Knights of Labour, and almost every considerable branch of women's industry was represented in these organisations, the most prominent being the Daughters of St. Crispin (shoe-workers). The first women's assembly under the Knights of Labour was held in September 1881. From its first institution this association had realised the necessity of including women. The preamble to this constitution, adopted by the first national convention of the Knights of Labour in January 1878, included on this subject two significant provisions. One called for the prohibition of the employment of children in workshops, mines and factories before attaining their fourteenth year. The other gave as one of the principal objects of the order: "To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work." And the founder of the Order, at the second national convention in 1879, asked for the formulation of an emphatic utterance on the subject of equal pay for equal work. "Perfected machinery," he said, "persistently seeks cheap labour and is supplied mainly by women and children. Adult male labour is thus

crowded out of employ, and swells the ranks of the unemployed, or at least the underpaid." The women not only demanded better wages but appealed for protective legislation.

The numbers increased steadily till May 1886, when twenty-seven local branches, entirely composed of women, were added in a month. But a decline set in, and in the next following six years, the whole strength of female Unionism under the Knights of Labour disappeared. It had probably never exceeded 50,000.[1]

The policy of labour organisations generally has, however, considerably developed in regard to the affiliation and membership of women. The General Federation of Trade Unions, which formerly had been indifferent or hostile to women-workers, had come to recognise even in the 'eighties that women occupied a permanent place in industry, and that it was both necessary and desirable that they should be organised. The position was summarised in an article in the *Detroit Free Press*.[2]

An Equal Chance.

Woman is now fairly established in the labour-market as the rival of man. Whether this is the normal condition of things is a point doubted by some political economists; but whether it be so or not, it is likely to remain the order of things practically for generations to come. This being so it must be accepted, and every fair-minded person must wish her to have an equal chance in the competition. A woman supporting her mother and little brothers and

[1] Space does not permit us to give a full account of the efforts for co-operative action for social purposes made by working women at this period, or of the interesting study of social conditions made by Leonora Barry, the investigator of women's work under the Knights of Labour. See Report on Women's Unions, Chapter IVA.

[2] Quoted in the *Cotton Factory Times*, September 18, 1885.

sisters is a very common spectacle; and the fact that Professor Somebody regards her as abnormal does not make her bread and butter any cheaper. She is entitled to at least as much sympathy as the man who supports a wife and children. For his charge, it must always be remembered, is voluntary—he took it on himself. She could not help her responsibilities; he assumed his of his own accord. It is therefore quite just that she should have an equal chance.

In more recent years the growth of industry and the increasing use of mechanical power has constantly tended towards larger utilisation of women's labour. The American Federation's declared policy is to unite the labouring classes irrespective of colour, sex, nationality, or creed. Unionism among working women has been promoted, women delegates have been appointed to serve at the Convention, and local Unions of women have been directly affiliated. Many national Unions, of course, are not directly concerned with female labour, and a small number entirely forbid the admission of women. Of these are the barbers, watch-case engravers, and switchmen.

Moulders do not admit women, and penalise members who give instruction to female workers in any branch. Core-making, for instance, employs some women, and the Union seeks to restrict or minimise it. The operative potters, upholsterers, and paper-makers admit women in certain branches but not in others. The upholsterers admit them only as seamstresses. But in all trades making these restrictions the number of women employed is small, and the effect of the restrictions is probably insignificant. Other Unions encourage the organisation of women-workers. In some of these men predominate, as in the printers, cigar-makers, boot- and shoe-makers, and women compete only in

the lighter and less-skilled branches. In others women predominate, as among the garment workers, textile workers, laundry, glove, hat and cap workers. Some Unions make special concessions to women, *e.g.* a smaller registration and dues, in order to induce them to join. The motive for these concessions is clear, as the proportion of women to men in these industries is much higher than the same proportion in the Union.

In San Francisco the steam laundry workers have been organised with considerable success. Down to 1900 the condition of these women was extremely bad. "Living in" was the prevailing custom. The food and accommodation were wretched in the extreme, the hours inhumanly long, sometimes from 6 A.M. to midnight, wages eight to ten dollars a month for workers living in, ten to twenty-five for other workers. An agitation was started to give publicity to these facts, and an ordinance was passed to prohibit work in laundries on Sundays or after 7 P.M. The ordinance was not observed, however, and the girls formed a committee and complained to the press. It was proposed to form a Union. Three hundred men employed in the industry applied for a charter to the Laundry Workers' International Union. The men did not wish to include girls as members, but the International would not give the charter if women were excluded. On the other hand, the women were timid and afraid of victimisation. One girl with more courage or more initiative than the others, however, was chosen to be organiser, and carried on her work secretly for about sixteen weeks with extraordinary energy and effectiveness. Suddenly it came out that a majority of employees in every laundry had joined the Union. They had refrained from declaring themselves until

they had a large and influential membership, and then came out with a formal demand for shorter hours, higher wages, and a change of system. Public sympathy was aroused, and by April 1901 the conditions in the San Francisco laundries were revolutionised. Boarding was abolished, wages were increased, hours shortened to ten daily, with nine holidays a year. In more recent years these capable organisers have succeeded in obtaining the eight hours day by successive reductions of the working time.

In the same city an interesting case is recorded in which the girls in a cracker (or biscuit) factory struck against over-pressure. The packers, who had to receive and pack the crackers automatically fed into the bins by machinery, found the work speeded up to such a degree that they could not cope with it. Their complaints were received with apparent respect and attention, but after a short interval the same speeding-up occurred again. With some difficulty, many of the girls being Italian and speaking little English, a Union was formed and affiliated to the Labour Council, whose representative then approached the employers. The matter was settled by arranging to have extra hands so as to meet the extra work occasioned by speeding, and an arrangement was also made to allow each girl ten minutes' interval for rest both in the morning and afternoon spell.

The Industrial Workers of the World, a Labour Society with a revolutionary programme, has a large membership of unskilled workers, in textile and other industries. It doubtless includes many women, for women took part in a conflict with the city government of Spokane, Washington, over the question of free speech, the city having attempted to prevent street

meetings. The workers were successful, but not without a severe struggle, in the course of which 500 men and women went to jail, many of whom adopted the hunger-strike.

In the great strike of textile workers in Lawrence, Mass., in 1912, a remarkably spontaneous effort was made by the Polish women-weavers at the Everett mill. The hours of work had been reduced by legislation from 56 to 54 per week, and the employees demanded that the same money should be paid to them as before the change. In the Everett mill about 80 per cent of the weavers were Poles. In one of the weave-rooms the Polish weavers, almost all women, stopped their looms after receiving their money on January 11, and tried to persuade the workers in some other sections of the mill to come out with them.[1] The story of this strike shows that women are fully capable of feeling the wave of class-consciousness that brings about the development of what is called "New Unionism"; but probably the difficulty of their taking a serious part in control and management is even greater than in craft Unions. Information is, however, very scanty as to the relation of women to the I.W.W., which in its literature is quite as prone as the more aristocratic craft Union to ignore the part taken by women in organisation.

In 1908, when the Bureau of Labour made its enquiry into the conditions of women wage-earners in the U.S.A., the number of Unions containing ten or more female members was 546, and the number of female members was only 63,989, estimated at only 2 per cent of the total membership of the Unions.

[1] Report of the Strike of Textile Workers in Lawrence, Mass., p. 63.

The largest group of women Unionists are those engaged in the making of or working at men's garments ; these number over 17,000. The textile workers came next with 6000 ; the boot and shoe workers, hat and cap workers, and tobacco workers form three groups of over 5000 each.

This census, however, was taken at a most unfavourable moment, when many Unions were suffering from the trade depression of the previous autumn and winter. It is also true that the numbers in actual membership are not a complete measure of the numbers under the direct influence and guidance of the Unions. It has been found that the numbers of women ready to come out on strike and enrol themselves in Unions or enforce a particular demand at a particular moment are considerably in excess of the number normally enlisted.

At the same time there is little use in denying that, speaking generally, the results attained by women's organisations, after eighty or ninety years of effort, are disappointing. Women's Unions in America have been markedly ephemeral in character, usually organised in time of strikes, and frequently disappearing after the settlement of the conflict that brought them into being.

A great obstacle to the organisation of women is no doubt the temporary character of their employment. The mass of women-workers are young, the great majority being under twenty-five. The difficulty of organising a body of young, heedless, and impatient persons is evident, especially in the case of girls and women who do not usually consider themselves permanently in industry. In the words of the Commissioner :

To the organiser of women into Trade Unions is furnished all of the common obstacles familiar to the organiser of male wage-earners, including short-sighted individual self-interest, ignorance, poverty, indifference, and lack of co-operative training. But to the organisers of women is added another and most disconcerting problem. When men marry they usually become more definitely attached to the trade and to the community and to their labour Union. Women as a rule drop out of the trade and out of the Union when marriage takes them out of the struggle for economic independence.

Another great difficulty is the opposition of the employers. " Employers commonly and most strenuously object to a Union among the women they employ." When once an organisation has attained any size, strength, or significance, the employers almost always set themselves to break it up, and have usually succeeded. In Boston, for instance, a Union of some 800 members was broken up by the posting of a notice by the firm that its employees must either join its own employers' Union or quit work. Some employers look upon female labour as the natural resource in case of a strike, as see the case quoted by Miss Abbott (*Women in Industry*, p. 206). There are reasons why employers object even more strongly to Unions among women than among men. In a number of cases production is mainly carried on by women and girls, only a few men being required to do work requiring special strength and skill. In such instances the employers do not particularly object to the organisation of their few men, whom, as skilled workers, they would anyhow have to pay fairly well. But when it comes to organising women and demanding for them higher wages and shorter hours, the matter is much more serious.

The present unsatisfactory condition of women's Unions is, however, only what might be expected in the early years of such a movement. Men's Unions have all gone through a similar period of weak beginnings, and in America there are special difficulties arising from the presence of masses of unskilled or semi-skilled workers of different races and tongues, and varying in their traditions and standard of life. There is much encouragement to be derived from the fact that the leaders in men's Unions, both national and local, now have more faith than formerly in Unionism for women. The American Federation of Labour calls upon its members to aid and encourage with all the means at their command the organisation of women and girls, "so that they may learn the stern fact that if they desire to achieve any improvement in their condition it must be through their own self-assertion in the local Union." From 1903 onward every Convention has favoured the appointment of women organisers. Women also are developing a greater sense of comradeship with their fellows and of solidarity with the Labour Movement generally. As we have seen, there are now few Unions which discriminate against women in their constitutions, and the universal Trade Union rule is "equal pay for equal work for men and women."

Even the special condition of this instability in industry, the temporary nature of women's work, which is so great an obstacle to organisation, is thought to be changing. Within the last thirty or forty years, changes in industrial and commercial methods have opened up numerous lines of activity to women, in addition to the factory work, sewing and domestic service, which used to be her main field: "marriage is coming to be looked upon less and less as a woman's

sole career, and at the same time the attitude in regard to wage-earning after marriage is changing. The tendency of these movements is to create an atmosphere of permanency and professionalism for woman as a wage-earner, especially among women in the better-paid occupations, which in time may markedly change her attitude toward industrial life." Such a change of outlook and habits of mind must doubtless be slow, but there are signs that it is in progress on both sides of the Atlantic. The future of Unionism for women is therefore not without hope, however unsatisfactory the immediate prospect may be. Miss Matthews, the writer of an interesting study of women's Unions in San Francisco, sums up her observations on the subject as follows :

> Experience in contesting for their rights in Union seems to have developed leaders among the Trade Union women. Wages, hours, and shop conditions have all shown the impress of the influence exerted by the organised action of the workers. But if wages, hours, and shop conditions did not enter into the question at all, still Trade Unionism among women would show its results in a higher moral tone made possible by the security which comes from the knowledge that there are friends who will protest in time of trouble and offer hope for better days ; it would display its influence in a more awakened and trained intelligence ; it would make evident its effort in a happier attitude towards the day's work, arising from the fact that the worker herself has studied her industry and has participated in determining the conditions under which she earns her livelihood.

In 1903–4 a Women's Trade Union League, on the lines of the organisation of the same name in England, was formed, and is doing excellent work to promote solidarity and union among women-workers.

CHAPTER IVA.

WOMEN IN UNIONS (*continued*).

Women's Unions in Germany.[1]—In Germany the obstacles have been far greater than in England. The relative prevalence of "Hausindustrie" and the greater poverty stood in the way of women's organisation, and until a few years back the law did not allow women to join political societies. Women were not, it is true, prohibited from joining Trade Unions, but the line between political and trade societies is not in practice always easy to draw, and full membership of Unions has thus been often hindered.

The first Women's Unions were started in the early 'seventies of the last century, by middle-class women who were also in the forefront of the battle for the Suffrage. The authorities dissolved the societies. Women-workers did not long maintain the alliance with the "Women's Rights" Party. An independent organisation was formed, which greatly exceeded the previous efforts in numbers and significance. The immediate impulse to the formation of this Union was given by the proposal of the Government to put a duty on sewing-thread, which would have been a great burden on the needle-women who had to provide the thread. Three societies were formed, the first

[1] This chapter was written before the outbreak of war.

being the " Verein zur Vertretung der Interessen der Arbeiterinnen," which was followed by the " Nordverein der Berliner Arbeiterinnen " and the " Fachverein der Mäntelnäherinnen," both of which were founded and controlled by working women. Investigations of the wages and conditions of working women were undertaken by these societies, in consequence of which a debate in the Reichstag took place, followed by an official enquiry into the wages of the women-workers in the manufacture of underclothing and ready-made garments, which only confirmed the conclusion already reached by private enquiry. The Truck Act was made more stringent, in response to the working women's movement, but as a secondary result all the societies were dissolved and the leaders prosecuted. The authorities were taking fright at the increase in the Socialist vote and in the membership of Trade Unions; and the Reichstag, under the tutelage of Bismarck, in 1878 passed the notorious Anti-Socialist Law, under which not only Socialist societies but even Trade Unions were harassed and suppressed. During the twelve years in which the law was in force, however, propaganda work was still carried on with heroic courage and perseverance, and the solidarity and class-consciousness of the workers, both men and women, was developed and strengthened by their natural indignation against the persecution suffered.

The men's attitude towards the women-workers, which had been formerly reactionary and sometimes hostile, gradually changed, partly because of the energy and courage the women had shown, partly through a growing recognition, which was intensified by the enormous increase in women industrial workers shown in the Census Report, 1895, that exclusion of

women from the men's Unions could only exasperate industrial competition in its worst form. In 1890 a Conference was held at Berlin at which the Central Commission of German Trade Unions was founded, and its attitude towards women was indicated by the fact that a woman was a member of its Committee. Measures were taken that in the committees of societies which excluded women from membership, resolutions should be proposed for an alteration of rules, and in most cases these were adopted. Under their guidance an agitation was set on foot to induce women to join Unions. Into this agitation the women organisers put an energy, patience, and self-sacrifice that is beyond praise. Now the German Free Unions ("freie Gewerkschaften") are not identified with any political propaganda, and cannot legally spend money for political purposes if they have members under eighteen. But in practice they are largely led and controlled by members of the Social Democratic Party, and thus it has happened that working women, who were forced to abandon their own societies and to join forces with the general Labour Movement, are now largely under the influence and identified with the movement for social democracy. It is incorrect to speak of the Unions as "Social Democratic Unions," and yet in fact the two forces do work in harmony.

In the Labour Movement women found their natural allies. Their co-operation secured men against "blackleg" competition, and on the other hand the social democrats have worked for women. In 1877 they petitioned for improvements in the working conditions of women, and in 1890, that women should have votes for the industrial councils that were then under consideration. Bebel's *Die Frau und der*

Sozialismus appeared about this time, and made a profound sensation. In this work the relations of the social question with the woman question were analysed. "Nothing but economic freedom for woman," said Bebel, "could complete her political and social emancipation."

In 1908 some of the remaining obstacles that impeded women from taking part in political and trade societies were done away with by the Federal Association law. The outstanding fact at the present time is the enormous relative increase in the numbers of women Unionists. Frau Gnauck gives the numbers in 1905 as 50,000 in the "Free" or social democratic Unions, 10,000 in the Christian. The figures for 1912, from the *German Statistical Year-Book*, will be found at the end of the section.[1] It will be observed that although, as with us, the largest group of organised women is in the textile trades, the members are more generally distributed, and the non-textile Unions show larger numbers, both absolutely and relatively, than is the case in England.

The centralised Unions undoubtedly owe their origin chiefly to the Social Democratic exertions, and are strongly class-conscious. They, however, favour the view that it is the duty of the State to protect the workers by legislation from excessive exploitation, and that it is the main business of the Unions to achieve as far as possible immediate improvements in wages and labour conditions. The comparative ease with which new Unions have been built up and existing Unions amalgamated is very largely due to Social

[1] It is a curious reflection on the tardiness of our Government statistical work, that figures for German Trade Unions are here actually accessible for a more recent date than those of English Unions. [Written early in 1914.]

Democratic influence. Before Trade Unions existed to any extent worth mentioning, Lassalle's campaign for united action had taught the workers that the engineer and his helper, the bricklayer and his labourer, were of one class and had one supreme interest in common ; that there was only one working class, and varieties of calling and degrees of skill were not the proper basis of organisation even for trade ends. The ideal no doubt is one great Union of all workers, regardless of occupation. This is in practice unattainable ; but the Germans, in whom class-consciousness is so strong, are reducing the Unions to the smallest possible number, and are also linked closely together by means of the General Commission.

The General Commission of Trade Unions has its office in Berlin. It publishes a weekly journal called a *Korrespondenzblatt*, containing information of value to Trade Unionists and students of Trade Unionism. Connected with the Commission is a secretariat for women, the work of which is to promote organisation among women-workers. Still more recently it has been arranged that each Union with any appreciable membership of women should have a woman organiser. The rapid increase among women members is an indication of the increasing interest taken by the women themselves. Considerable diversity in the scale of contributions is one characteristic—young persons, as well as women, being admitted members along with adult males.

It is evident that the German form of organisation is much better calculated to catch the weaker and less-skilled classes of workers than is the more aristocratic and old-fashioned craft Union of our own country. The Germans hold that the organisation of

the unskilled labourer is as important as that of the mechanic, and their great industrial combinations include all men- and women-workers within the field of operations, irrespective of their particular grade of skill. Endeavours are made to enrol all workers in big effective organisations, and the success of these tactics has been most significant. While in Germany two and a half million workers are organised in forty-eight centralised Unions, all affiliated to the General Commission as the national centre, in England there are more than a thousand separate Unions with about the same total membership. In England barely one million Unionists out of the two and a half belong to the General Federation. These facts are not without bearing on the position of women-workers. English working men complain of the competition of women; the moral is, organise the women.

Another important field of Trade Union activity is in the education of their members. There is a Trade Union School at Berlin supported entirely by Trade Union funds and managed by Trade Unionists. Care is also taken that members of Unions should be politically educated to understand their rights and duties as citizens. Women-workers in all the "freie Gewerkschaften" enjoy the same privileges as men, and are eligible for all boards or elected bodies of their respective Unions. There are as yet, however, only two Unions in Germany which have a woman president, and the majority on the executives of the other Unions are men. This is not due to opposition by men, or to rules impeding the appointment of women on these bodies, but rather to the indifference of many women-workers, who, as in England, fail to interest themselves in the affairs of their Unions. This lack of enthusiasm on the

part of women is ascribed to their position in the home and to the difficulty that they have in combining household work with wage-work, and at the same time retaining any leisure or energy to concern themselves with Union matters.

Contributions and benefits are usually somewhat lower than in the case of men, because women's earnings are usually less. Five national Unions have, however, adopted the principle of equal scales for men and women. In these cases the amount of contribution varies according to the wages earned, and benefits are graduated to prevent the risk of women becoming a greater burden on the funds than men.

It is a patent fact that the number of organised women-workers is very small when compared with men in the same organisation, but the relative increase is great, and the spirit of association is said to be gaining a strong hold on women. The fact that so many German women continue work after marriage is said to be one cause of the increasing interest taken in Unions, their position as wage-earners being not merely a temporary one, to be abandoned in a few years' time.

The "Christian" Trade Unions contain no very large numbers of women compared to the "free" societies. They were also considerably later in coming into existence, and appear, though ostensibly non-political, to be largely due to reactionary political influences, and organised in opposition to the Socialist party. The Home Workers' Union is mainly philanthropic and controlled by ladies. The Christian Unions have enemies on both sides, as they are naturally regarded with considerable suspicion by the "Free" or "Central" Unions, but nevertheless are also disapproved of by the authorities of the Catholic Church.

The Christian Unions started with the aim of being inter-denominational ("interkonfessionelle"), including Protestants as well as Catholics, and a considerable degree of sympathy with labour was combined with their mainly reactionary propaganda; they even considered strikes a possible and ultimate resource, although they desired to avoid them. In many cases, pressed forward perhaps by the rank and file, they have co-operated with the "Free" Unions, who are so much stronger in numbers and finance than themselves. These tendencies excited the displeasure of the strict Catholic body, and not only the German Bishops, but the Pope himself, have shown hostility to the Christian Unions, which have thus been rent by internal dissensions. Catholic Unions of a strictly denominational type have been formed in opposition to the inter-denominational Christian Unions, and though the former are of little importance as organisations, they no doubt have some effect in weakening the body from which they have branched off. However that may be, the numbers in the Christian Unions, though showing a considerable percentage increase, are insignificant compared to the large "Free" Unions. In quite recent years the Christian Unions have lent themselves to strike-breaking and are becoming discredited in the labour world. The Hirsch-Duncker Unions have only a very small number of women members, and are of little importance for the women's labour movement. These Unions were founded and are partly controlled by middle-class Liberals.

It may be interesting here briefly to compare the views of two distinguished German women writers on the question of Trade Unionism for women. Frau Braun, writing in 1901, says that the development of

the great industry is the force that impelled men to combine successfully together, but industrially women are about a century behind men, and before they can be successfully organised, home-work must be repressed in every form, and women's work must develop into factory industry much more completely than it has yet done. Home-work tends to perpetuate the dependence of women, enabling the home-keeping wife or daughter to carry on a bye-industry, and is therefore an evil. Again, the poverty of women is a great obstacle to their organisation. Economic history shows that well-paid workers organise more quickly and effectively than those who are isolated, oppressed and degraded. Women-workers most urgently need to be enlightened, but this cannot happen until they have been lifted out of the intense pressure of physical need ; they must be given time to read, to follow the news of the day, to get beyond the horizon of their own four walls. This cannot be attained by Trade Union action alone. Legislative measures must be taken for the relief of the women-workers. English history shows that Lancashire women weavers before the Factory Act were as incapable of organisation, as easy a prey to the exploiter of their work, as the majority of women-workers are to-day. It was only after the law had restricted their hours of work that they began to organise in Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies.

In Frau Braun's opinion women-workers will lose more than they gain by adopting the style of the women's movement in the bourgeois sense. Save where absolutely necessary, organisation for women only is a source of weakness to the women-workers' movement. The numerous societies for women-workers' education, the independent Socialist women's

congresses, and especially the women's Unions promoted by the advocates of " women's rights," all these are dangerous.

A working woman's movement fully conscious of its aims and principles will permit this class of organisation only in the case of Unions for trades exclusively feminine, or of educational clubs or institutes when no other is accessible to women-workers. In principle they should all be avoided, for they can only confuse the issue, and exaggerate the one-sided feminist point of view which leaves out of account the class solidarity of workers and women-workers, the indispensable condition of any successful effort by the proletariat. And it follows from this point of view that co-operation with the bourgeois woman's movement should be refused, whether in the form of admission to " bourgeois " women's societies or the inclusion of " bourgeois " advocates of women's rights in women-workers' societies. Both England and France, Frau Braun thinks, offer examples of the reactionary effect of such co-operation ; the numberless work-girls' clubs, holiday homes and the like, managed by ladies of the upper and middle classes in England are one cause of the political backwardness of the English working women. Co-operation is too apt to degenerate into tutelage. The German women's movement has steadily refused any co-operation with the bourgeois movement, because it recognises the complete divergence of principle lying at the back of the two movements, and the difference of standpoint as well as of aim.

Not that every Socialist is sound on the woman question ! Far from it. Frau Braun recognises that in many a Social democrat there lurks the old reactionary philistine feeling about woman : " Tout pour

la femme, mais rien avec elle." The increase of women's employment has considerably shaken this conviction in the Trade Unions, because the organisation of women is seen more and more to be a condition of their very existence. But more than this, they need to recognise the vast importance of educating, enlightening the working woman, binding her closer and closer to the Socialist cause. Women have the future destiny of men in their hands. They mould and shape the character of the children. If Socialism can gain the women, it will have the future with it. To bring the women into closer community with the labour movement, to translate their paper equality into living fact, is no fantastic dream ; it is part of the obligation of the modern " knights of labour " in the interest of themselves and their cause.

Frau E. Gnauck-Kühne writes in sympathy with the Catholic Unions of the older type, viz. the " Interkonfessionelle." Like Frau Braun, she greatly prefers organisation for working women along with men to separate Unions. Separate organisations, she remarks, require double staff, double expenses of book-keeping, finance and secretarial arrangements, and are more costly, not to mention that the women's wages are so low, the contributions they can make are so small that a sound and effective Union of women only is scarcely possible. Frau Gnauck lays stress on the psychological difficulties of organising women. For ages men have been accustomed to work in common, to subject themselves to discipline ; their work brings them into relation with their fellows of the same calling, with their equals. The traditional work of women, on the contrary, has kept them in isolation ; the private household was, and is still, a little world in itself, and

in this world the woman has no peers—she has as housewife no relation to other housewives, and there is nothing to connect her work at home with the outside world or public matters. She is very slow to perceive the advantages of new methods, labour-saving devices, co-operation and so forth, which might so greatly lessen domestic toil if intelligently applied. With a certain sly humour Frau Gnauck points out that the housewife has no expert criticism to undergo, for her husband is often out the whole day, and understands nothing of housekeeping or the care of children if he were at home. The housewife as worker (not, be it observed, as wife) is in the position of an absolute ruler ; she has no one's opinion to consider but her own, no inspection or control to regard ; she is a law unto herself. This habit of mind is not calculated to fit woman for combined action ; rather does it tend to promote individualism and a lack of discipline, which hinders concerted effort in small things or in great. This is not to deny that many women are capable of the greatest devotion and sacrifice, even to the point of self-annihilation. The loftiest courage for personal action and self-sacrifice, as Frau Gnauck keenly remarks, is nevertheless in its way an emphasis of individual will and action, a heightening of self, even though for unselfish ends. Concerted action demands a surrender of individuality, the power to find oneself in the ranks with one's equals. Men are better trained for this kind of corporate action than women normally are. The older women are too much burdened, and continually oppressed with the thought of meeting the week's expenses, the young ones are indifferent because they expect to get married.

Frau Gnauck, however, refuses to despair even of organising the woman-worker. We must, she says, put

ourselves in her place ; we must realise that as no man can see over his horizon, we must bring something that the woman worker *can* see over her horizon, something that will strike her imagination, something that will build a bridge from her over to those large ideas, " class-interest," " general good," which so far she has neither time, spirit, nor money enough to understand. She must be drawn at first by the prospect of some small but concrete improvement in her own condition, which will make it seem worth while to give the time and money that the Union wants. Appeal to the feeling all women have for a home of their own. Explain to them in simple language that the Union would prevent under-bidding and undercutting, and thus raise men's wages. More men could marry on these higher wages, married women need not go to work, and both the single woman and the married would benefit.

Frau Gnauck is in agreement with Frau Braun as to the advisability of common organisation, for if the women cannot join the men's Unions, they are helpless, and if they form a Union of their own, they will probably be too weak to avoid being played off against the men. She takes, on the other hand, a much more favourable view than Frau Braun of the various philanthropic clubs and societies formed by women of a superior class. These organisations do not of course do anything to improve the economic position, they cannot in any way take the place of Trade Unions, but they provide a kind of preparatory stage, a training in association, an opportunity for discussion, and in the present circumstances, with the isolated condition in which working women and girls so often have to live, all these experiences are a means of development and an educational help to more serious organisation later on. This is

borne out by Dr. Erdmann,[1] who, whilst opposed to the Catholic Unions as reactionary, admits that even in these Unions the workers soon begin to feel the need of Trade Union organisations, and often end by joining the Socialist Union.

NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN UNIONS—GERMANY.

Largest Occupation Groups.	Number.	Per cent of Total.
FREIE GEWERKSCHAFTEN. (Total women, 216,462.)		
Textile workers	53,363	24·6
Metal	26,848	12·4
Factory workers	25,146	11·6
Tobacco	17,918	8·2
Bookbinders	15,979	7·4
CHRISTIAN UNIONS. (Total women, 28,008.)		
Textile workers	12,811	45·7
Home workers	8,188	29·2
Tobacco	3,088	11·0
HIRSCH-DUNCKER UNIONS. (Total women, 4950.)		
Textile workers	1,880	38·0

The Outlook.—It will be seen from the preceding chapter and section that a general view of women in Unions presents a somewhat ambiguous and contradictory picture. In one industry, cotton, there are in England two large Unions of remarkable strength

[1] A. Erdmann, *Church and Trade Union in Germany*, 1913.

and effectiveness, in which women are organised with men, and form a majority of the Union. The women cotton weavers and card-room operatives form nearly 70 per cent of all the organised women. In the other textile industries, in the clothing trades, and some others, a comparatively small number of women are organised, either with men, or in branches closely in touch with the men's Unions, but these Unions are of various degrees of strength, and in no case include a large proportion of the women employed. There are also some women organised in Unions of general labourers and workers, and their numbers have increased rapidly in the last few years, but are not as yet considerable. We also find many small Unions of women only in various occupations, but it is a curious fact that women have so far evolved very little organisation in their most characteristic occupations such as domestic service, nursing, dressmaking and millinery. Unions of some kind in these occupations are not unknown, but they are quite inconsiderable in comparison with the numbers employed. Yet the strategic position of the workers in some of these occupations is in some respects strong. A fairly well-organised strike of London milliners in the first week in May, or of hotel servants and waitresses along the south coast, say about the last week in July, would probably be irresistible. The same applies to women in certain factory processes when the work is a monopoly of women and cannot be done by men's fingers. Paper-sorting is a typical instance ; a paper-sorters' strike just before the Christmas present season might be highly effective. In such occupations as these, nevertheless, Unionism is mostly conspicuous by its absence.

There is little use in denying that there are special

difficulties in the way of the organisation of women. The old difficulty of the hostility of men Unionists is largely a thing of the past, but many others remain. There are difficulties from hostility and indifference on the part of the employers; long hours of work; family ties and duties; educational deficiencies among working women themselves, and the intellectual and moral effects that result from ignorance. An immense difficulty is the low rate of wages characteristic of so many women's employments, which makes it impossible in most cases to pay contributions sufficient for adequate benefit during a strike. Competition is another difficulty, especially in low-grade and unspecialised trades, where places can easily be filled. There is the constant dread among workers of this class and low-grade home workers that, if they attempt any resistance, some other woman will go behind them and take the work for still less wages. Even collecting contributions is often a considerable difficulty; if it is done at the factory it may subject the collector to disfavour and victimisation; if not, the labour is very considerable. Another great difficulty in organising women is the prospect of marriage. A girl looks upon her industrial career as merely a transition stage to getting married and having a home of her own. This need not in itself hinder her being a "good trade unionist," for after all the industrial career of a girl, beginning at twelve, thirteen, or fourteen, may well be eight or ten years long, even if she marries young, but it no doubt does tend to deflect her energies and sentiment from Unionism. The prospect of marriage, which to a young man is a steadying influence, making for thrift and for the strengthening of his class by solidarity and corporate action, is to a young girl a distraction from industrial

efficiency, an element of uncertainty and disturbance.

Again, the position of women renders them especially amenable to social influences. Social differences between different grades of workers keep them apart from one another and make combination difficult. Women are more susceptible than men to the influence of their social superiors. In the past, and even in the present, though less than formerly, no doubt, the influence of upper class women has been and is used against the Trade Union spirit. Charity and philanthropy have tended to counterbalance the forces that have been drawing the working class together. Miss Collet found in investigating for the Labour Commission that the homes and hostels for the working girls run by religious and benevolent societies had an atmosphere unfavourable to Trade Unionism, and influenced the girls to look coldly on agitation for improved material conditions. Lack of public spirit is, in short, the great difficulty with women. Their economic position, their training and education, the influence of the classes considered superior, above all perhaps the pressure of custom and tradition, all these have combined to prevent or postpone corporate action and class solidarity.

Must we admit that women are inherently incapable of organisation, which by a kind of miracle or chance has been achieved successfully in one district and in one industry only? A further consideration of the Board of Trade figures gives a rather different complexion to the matter.

In the building, mining, metal and transport trades there are practically no women unionists, but with the exception of metal there are only a very few women

employed in these trades at all. In the other non-textile trades the proportion of women organised is very small, and the proportion of organised women to organised men is also small. But it happens that in most of these trades the women employed are also few compared with the men, and the men themselves are not strongly organised. In the woollen and worsted trade organisation is not strong for either sex. In cotton alone do we get a really strong organisation of both men and women. It begins to dawn upon us at this point that the weak organisation of women is after all part and parcel of the general problem of organisation in those trades. No doubt it is an extremer and specially difficult form of the problem. But on the whole, with the exception of the metal trades, it holds good that where women are employed together with men, they are strongly organised where men are strongly organised, weak where men are weak. Even in metal trades the exceptions are more apparent than real. The strong Unions are in branches of work that women do not do; and a glance down the list of those metal workers who make the small wares and fittings in which women's employment is increasing does not reveal any great strength of male Unionism, except perhaps in the brass-workers, who exceeded 7000 in 1910. Directly we realise this intimate connexion of women's unionism with the Labour Movement as a whole, a light is thrown on many puzzling discrepancies.

In the case of women there have been in the last forty years or so two tendencies at work. One is towards the sporadic growth of small unco-ordinated Unions of women only. Financially weak and in some cases governed by a retrograde policy, numbers of such Unions spring up and die down again. A few achieve

some measure of success, and occasionally a very small Union will show a very considerable degree of persistence and vitality without perceptible increase of numbers. Occasionally such Unions are competing with mixed Unions in the same occupation, each of course regarding the other as the intruder. It matters very little who is to be blamed for the overlapping. The only important thing is to recognise that such tactics mean playing into the enemy's hands, with disastrous results for labour. Apart from such unfortunate instances, it would be foolish to deny that the small Unions of women only have provisionally at least a considerable usefulness. The women must be roped in somehow, and even the most precarious organisation may have a distinct educational value in evoking in its members the germ of a sense of class-solidarity and membership with their fellows. I am almost tempted to say that *any* force that brings women consciously into association with aims higher than petty and personal ones is ultimately for good, however destructive it may seem to be in some of its manifestations.

The other tendency is towards the organisation of women either jointly with men or in close connexion with men's Unions. In these cases there have been many failures and some successes. The question of adjustment is highly complicated, and cannot be settled on broad lines as with the cotton weavers. "Equal pay for equal work" is not a ready-made solution for all difficulties, for the work is very often not equal at all. In most cases it is absolutely distinct, and in many there is a troublesome margin where the work of men and women is very nearly the same but not quite.

The men often regard women as unscrupulous competitors, and though they have mostly abandoned

the old policy of excluding women, they are apt to try and organise them from their own point of view, without regard to the women's special interests. Rough measures of this kind only give a further impulse to schism, confusion and bitterness. At present undeniably there is here and there a good deal of ill-feeling, especially in districts like Manchester or Liverpool, with a number of ill-organised, ill-paid trades, and competing unco-ordinated Unions.

If Trade Unionism is to be effective, if membership is to be co-extensive with the trade and compulsory, as in the future we hope it will, there is no question that better methods are needed, greater centralisation, a more carefully thought-out policy, to avoid the present waste and competition.

It is not so much a change of heart as a coherent policy that is needed. The organisation of women has been taken up merely where it was obviously and pressingly needful, in order to safeguard the interests of the men immediately concerned. In the case of the cotton weavers, an altogether special and peculiar class, the problem was comparatively simple. It was of vital importance to the men to get the women in, and on the other hand, the men could do for the women a great deal which at that stage of social development and opinion the women could not possibly have done for themselves. The cotton weavers exhibit an interlocking of interests, so patent and unmistakable that it was not only perceived but acted upon. The card-room operatives lagged behind for a time, the organisation of women being not quite so evident and apparent a necessity, but they have now almost overtaken the weavers. In other industries the problem is more complicated and has taken much longer to grasp.

Take the interesting and suggestive industry of paper-making. How is the strongly organised, highly-paid paper-maker to realise that it matters very much that women should be organised in his trade ? His daughter may earn pocket-money at paper-sorting, but merely as a temporary employment. She will marry a respectable artisan and abandon work on marriage. The rag-cutters, on the other hand, belong to an altogether different class, being usually wives or widows of labourers. There is not enough class feeling to bind together such different groups. It is true enough that the problem of labour is a problem of class-solidarity, and that the women must in no wise be left out. "Whoever can help to strengthen Trade Unionism among women workers will be conferring a benefit on more than the women themselves." [1] But the depth and truth of this statement is by no means fully realised, and in many cases women have little chance of being organised by the men of their own trade. As Mr. Cole has told us, the weakness of British labour is the lack of central control and direction.

Outside the special case of the skilled workers in cotton, the organisation of women becomes more and more a question, not of craft, but of class. This is seen in the different form and type of organisation demanded by the "new unionism." The cotton weavers need in their secretary before all things the closest and minutest acquaintance with the technical mysteries of the craft. The secretary of a modern labour Union including all sorts of heterogeneous workers cannot possibly possess intimate technical knowledge of each. Personality, power of speech, the

[1] Report of Gas-workers' and General Labourers' Association, March 1897.

force and warmth of character that can draw together oppressed and neglected workers and make them feel themselves one, these are the elementary gifts needed to start a workers' Union, whether of men, women, or both together. But also if such a body is to be kept together and do effective work, it is especially in the " new unionism " that the need of central control and direction is felt. A national policy must take into consideration the needs of women and harmonise their interests with those of men. The success of the Women's Trade Union League is very largely due, not merely to the personality of its leaders, though no doubt that has been a considerable asset, but to the fact that it has a national policy and a definite aim.

Frau Braun eleven years ago saw that the labour woman ran some danger of being caught into the feminist movement and withdrawn from her natural place as an integral part of the Labour Movement itself. It is to be hoped that she has followed English social history in the interval with sufficient closeness to be aware of the far-sighted statesmanship shown by the leaders of the Trade Union League in avoiding such a pitfall.

However unsatisfactory and inadequate the organisation of women has been and still is, a review of the situation does not suggest any inherent incapacity of women for corporate action. In the cotton weavers' societies, although the main responsibility for organisation has rested on men's shoulders, yet the women and girls have consistently paid contributions amounting now to a relatively high figure, and they have constantly aided in the work of recruiting new members. Experience is now showing that in certain districts where the industry is becoming more and more a woman's trade,

the women have not been lacking in capacity to take over the work of managing the Union's affairs. The absence of women from the Committee of so many weavers' Unions at the present day is due to inertia and long surviving habit rather than to any real incapacity. In the recent ballot on the question of political action, the enormous proportion of votes recorded shows that a large proportion of women must have used the vote. In many of the small women's societies in Manchester a working woman is the secretary. In certain cases local Unions of women have been successful, notably the Liverpool upholstresses, the Edmonton ammunition workers and some others. The working woman is in fact beginning to show powers, hitherto unsuspected, of social work and political action. The Insurance Act has demanded women officials as "Sick Visitors" and "Pay Stewards," and the new duties thrown on the secretaries and committee by that Act are likely to bring about an increasing demand for the participation of women. The rapidly increasing numbers of women in the Shop Assistants' Union, the movement for a minimum wage in the co-operative factories, the increasing number of women in general labour Unions, all these are hopeful signs of a movement towards unity. The milliner and dressmaker in small establishments and the domestic servant will probably be the last to feel the rising wave. Even of these we need not despair. With the development of postal facilities, easy transit and opportunities for social intercourse, such as we may foresee occurring in the near future, there may be a considerable development of class-consciousness even among the workers among whom it is now most lacking, while the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Women's

Labour League, in their turn, are finding a way for the association of non-wage-earning women in the working class.

FEMALE MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS, 1913.

Occupation.	Numbers.	Per cent of Total.
Textile—		
Cotton preparing	53,317	14·9
Cotton spinning	1,857	0·5
Cotton weaving	155,910	43·8
Wool and worsted	7,738	2·2
Linen and jute	20,689	5·8
Silk	4,247	1·2
Hosiery, etc.	4,070	1·1
Textile printing, etc.	9,453	2·6
Total	257,281	72·1
Non-Textile—		
Boot and shoe	9,282	2·6
Hat and cap	3,750	1·1
Tailoring	9,798	2·7
Printing	5,893	1·7
Pottery	2,600	0·7
Tobacco	2,060	0·6
Shop assistants	24,255	6·8
Other trades	8,742	2·4
General labour	23,677	6·6
Employment of Public Authorities	9,625	2·7
Total	99,682	27·9
Grand Total	356,963	100·0

CHAPTER V.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF PART I.[1]

Changes effected by the Industrial Revolution.—We have seen that the industrial employment of women developed partly out of their miscellaneous activities as members of a family, partly out of their employment as domestic servants, partly out of the work given out from well-to-do households to their poorer neighbours. Weaving and spinning, the most typical and general employments of women, were carried on by them as assistants to the husband or father, or as servants lending a hand to their masters' trade, or were done direct for customers. In the last case, the work might be done either for the use of the manor or some other well-to-do household, or in the case of spinning and winding, the product might be sold to weavers directly or through a middleman. To a more limited extent, the same kind of conditions probably applied to work other than textile. The women acted as subordinate helpers or assistants, whether in the family or out of it. In the former case they were probably not paid but took their share of the family maintenance; in the latter they were earners. When the circumstances of the trade were favourable, *e.g.* when the demand for

[1] This chapter was written before the outbreak of war.

yarn exceeded the supply, women-workers may have earned very fair wages; but on the whole it appears that they were in an unfavourable position in selling their labour. The fact of working for nothing, as many did in the home, would not promote a high standard of remuneration, and the women who took in work from the manor or other wealthy households would probably be expected to regard employment as a favour.[1]

When the industrial revolution came, and the man with capital found himself in the exciting position of being able to obtain large returns from his newly-devised plant and machinery, the women and children were there waiting to be employed. Enormous profits were made out of the cheap labour of women and girls. The only alternative occupation of any extent was domestic service, then an overstocked and under-paid trade. The women and girls, accustomed to work at home, were not aware how greatly their productive power had increased, and had no means of justifying claims to an increased share of the produce, even if they had known how to make them. Many, as we have seen in Chapter II., were reduced to terrible poverty through the failure of work to the hand-loom weavers, and were ready to take any work they could get to eke out the family living.

The Survival of Previous Standards and Conditions.—The development of the great industry, the use of machinery and the concentration of capital, came at a time when the working class was peculiarly helpless to help itself, and the governing class was

[1] Many worthy folk to this day even show by the use of the phrase "*giving* employment" that they suppose themselves to be conferring a benefit on persons who work for them, irrespective of wages paid, and it is unlikely that our ancestors were more enlightened on this point than ourselves.

unable or unwilling to initiate any adequate social reform. The Enclosure Acts had weakened the spirit and independence of the agricultural working-class and increased destitution and pauperism, while wages were kept down through the operation of the allowance system under the Old Poor Law. Local depopulation in rural districts sent numbers of needy labourers, strong, industrious, and inured to small earnings, to swell the industrial population of towns.[1] But the crowning cruelty, the extremest folly, was the prohibition to combine. The special characteristic of the industrial revolution was the association of operatives under one roof, performing co-ordinated tasks under one control to produce a given result. Now this new method of associated labour was not only immensely more productive, but it also potentially held advantages for the workers. It brought them together, it gave them a common interest, it brought all sorts of social and civic possibilities within their reach. But to realise these possibilities it was essential that they should be able to join together, to take stock of the bewildering new situation which confronted them, to achieve some kind of corporate consciousness. This was denied them under various pains and penalties. Yet the State did not for a long time itself take action to give the factory class the protection they were forbidden to seek for themselves. The effect was that while the workers were bound, the employers were free or were restricted only to the very slight extent of the regulations of the early factory acts, and could impose very much such conditions of work as they pleased. What

[1] G. Slater, *English Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields*, Constable, 1907, p. 266. Compare Hammond, J. L. and B, *The Village Labourer*, chap. v.

those conditions were has been reiterated often enough. Work far into the night, or even both night and day; sanitation of the rudest and most defective kind where it was not absent altogether; industrial disease from dust, fluff and dirt, or from damp floors and steaming atmosphere; workrooms overheated or dismally cold; wages low, and subject to oppressive fines and fraudulent deductions,—such, and worse, is the dreary recital of the treatment meted out to the workers. The introduction of power machines was not *per se* the cause of these evils. Women had been accustomed to do the work that no one else wanted to do. The servile position of the woman-worker, the absence of combination among the operative class, and the lack of State or Municipal control over the conditions of industry and housing, all combined to provide "cheap and docile workers" for the factory system. And no doubt the factory system took full advantage of the opportunity. Capital inevitably seeks cheap labour. The governing class had carefully and deliberately provided that labour should be cheap.

What the Factory Act has done.—The awakening class-consciousness of the factory workers in Lancashire and Yorkshire led to agitation and petitions for a restriction of the hours of work. Leaving out of account the earlier Factory Acts, which were ill-devised and weak, the first effective regulation was the Factory Act of 1833. This Act was timid in the regulations imposed, which were too elastic to effect very much, but in the providing for the appointment of a staff of factory inspectors it asserted the right and duty of the State to control the conditions of industry, and also indirectly secured that the Government should be kept in possession of the facts. Only

young persons under eighteen were included under this Act, but in 1844 women also were included, and in 1847 and 1850 the working day was restricted to ten hours, and the period of employment was carefully defined to prevent evasion. In 1864 some dangerous trades were brought within the scope of the Acts, which had previously included textile and allied industries only, and in 1867 other non-textile industries and workshops were added. In 1878 a consolidating Act was passed to bring the employment of women and young workers under one comprehensive scheme. The plan of the Act of 1878 was retained in the Act of 1901, but a considerable number of new regulations, especially in regard to health and safety, were included. In 1893 a step of great importance for working women was taken, in the appointment of women factory inspectors.

It does not come within the scope of this volume to describe the history of factory regulations and control, but we may here ask ourselves the question, How much has been done for the women in industry by the State? What is the present position of the woman-worker?

In the first place, we note that sanitary conditions in factories and workshops are greatly improved and conditions as to health are more considered than was formerly the custom. This is not entirely due to the regulations of the Factory Act, but partly to the progress of public health generally, and to the development of scientific knowledge and humaner ideals of social life and manners. It is true that we are only at the beginning of this movement, and much remains to be done, as any one can satisfy himself by getting into touch with industrial workers, or by studying the Factory Inspectors' Reports, but it can hardly be

doubted that the woman-worker of to-day has a very different, a very much more civilised industrial environment than had her mother or her grandmother. The appointment of women inspectors counts for a great deal here, for in earlier times the needs of women-workers were not considered, or if considered were not known with any accuracy. In the second place we note that there has been a considerable development of special precautions for dangerous trades, and that in one instance of a dangerous substance, viz. white phosphorus, its use has even been prohibited, and the terrible disease known as "phossy jaw," formerly the bane of match-makers, has been stamped out. In regard to certain sweated industries measures have been taken to regulate wages through the instrumentality of the Trade Boards, and, as it appears, with a considerable measure of success.

Present Position of the Woman-Worker.—Otherwise it is strange to notice how very little the position of the woman-worker has been improved in recent years. She is still liable to toil her ten hours daily, just as her grandmother did, for five days in the week, though on Saturdays the hours have been somewhat curtailed. In non-textile factories ten and a half hours are permitted, though in many of the industries concerned a shorter day has become customary, whether through Trade Union pressure or a recognition on the employers' part that long hours "do not pay." Ten hours, or ten and a half, with the necessary pauses for meal-times, involve working "round the clock," which is still the recognised period of employment even for young persons of fourteen and over. The five hours' spell of continuous work is still permitted in non-textile factories and workshops, although the inspectors

have long been convinced that it is too long for health and energy, and Miss Squire reports that it is now condemned by all concerned with scientific management. In certain trades overtime is permitted, and the result is that girls and women may be employed fourteen hours a day, and if the employer takes his full advantage of it, as occasionally he does, the inspector can do nothing, the proceedings being perfectly legal.[1]

While the hours of work have been but very little shortened since 1874, the strain of work has been considerably increased, as we have seen, through the increased speed at which the machines are run. This is especially the case in the cotton trade, though it occurs in other factory industries. The demand upon the worker is much greater than formerly, and the reduction of hours has by no means kept pace with the increased strain. The backwardness of the Factory Act in these and some other matters is almost inconceivable. So important a matter as the lighting of work-places is still outside the scope of regulation. The nervous strain and serious risk to eyesight involved by doing work requiring close and accurate visual attention in a bad light need hardly be emphasised. The inspectors receive many complaints of badly-adjusted or otherwise defective artificial lighting of work-places, but have no weapon to use but persuasion, which happily is in some cases successfully invoked.

Another serious factor in the working woman's position is the weakness of the Truck Act, especially in

[1] See, *e.g.*, the cases mentioned in the Factory Inspectors' Report for 1912, p. 142, and compare the case reported by Miss Vines in the Report for 1913, p. 97. In a Christmas-card factory the women were being employed two days a week from 8 to 8, three days a week from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M., and Saturdays 8 to 4. "The whole staff of workers and foremen looked absolutely worn out."

regard to fines and deductions. Deductions, *e.g.* for spoilt work, are sometimes made on a scale altogether out of proportion to the weekly wages, and fines for being a few minutes late, or for trivial offences of various kinds, are often oppressive to a degree which can only be described as preposterous when compared with the value of the worker's time and attention measured in the payments they receive. In some cases convictions and fines are secured, and in other cases, even in some which are outside the law, the inspectors are able to obtain the adoption of reforms by employers, but many hard cases remain unredressed owing to the difficulty of interpreting the Acts.

All along the line our social legislation has been characterised by timidity and procrastination. Dr. Thomas Percival's statement of the case for State interference in factories (1796) was left for six years without notice from the Central Government, and the first Factory Act, 1802, was applied to apprentices only at a time when the apprenticeship system was falling into disuse. Later on, in response to the high-souled agitation of Sadler, Oastler, and Lord Ashley (afterwards Shaftesbury), after years of hesitation and vacillation, various inadequate measures were taken, but never quite the right thing at the right moment, never designed as part of a far-sighted policy that would recreate English industrial life and make it worth living—as it might be made—for the toilers of field and factory, workshop and mine. This weakness and backwardness in the policy of the Home Department is no doubt largely due to the covetousness of the capitalist and the control he is able to exercise on politics. It should be remembered, however, that the capitalist, or rather the capitalist employer, does not

present an unbroken front. In point of fact the best manufacturers do not oppose social legislation. They understand the need of a common rule, and the regulations of the Factory Acts have usually been modelled on the existing practice of the better kind of employer. Labour legislation is weakened and kept back by several causes other than the greed of employers. Among these may be mentioned the cumbersome and out-of-date procedure of the House of Commons, and the interminable delays that dog the progress of non-Governmental measures, even when these have the approval of all parties. Other causes are to be found in the class selfishness of the upper strata of society, their indifference to the needs of the people, their ignorance of the whole conditions of the industrial population's life. With bright exceptions, such as the late Lord Shaftesbury and some now living whose names will occur to the reader, not only the aristocracy and the very rich, but the conservative middle-class, the dwellers in suburbs and watering-places, cling to the idea of a servile class. They object to industrial regulations which give the workers statutory rights amongst their employers; they object to increasing the amenity of factory life and diminishing the supply of domestic servants. Labour legislation remains backward and undeveloped for want of the support of an enlightened public opinion.

The Strain of Modern Industry.—With the ill effects of the present system it is impossible for a non-medical writer to deal fully, but no one can have any talk with a doctor or a sick visitor under the Insurance Committee in a big industrial town without hearing terrible facts about the injury to women from the persistent standing at work. It seems likely also that these

injuries are not only due to overstrain among women after marriage and before and after confinement, but result in part from the fatigue endured by adolescent girls. Parents are too anxious to send children to work, and girls of fourteen and upwards are sometimes working in competition with boys, and suffer from trying to do as much. Pressure is put on girls to work three looms or even four, before they are really equal to the effort. It may, of course, be admitted that some of this strain and drive is self-inflicted. It is part of the admirable tenacity, self-reliance, and high standard of life of Lancashire women that they are keen about their earnings, and I have been told of girls who will return to the shed during meal-hours, or even go to work at 5.30 in summer-time, busying themselves in sweeping or making ready for work before the engine starts. These practices are illegal, and the employers often protect themselves by putting up a notice that any woman or young worker found in the shed out of working hours will be dismissed, or by sending an employee to clear the shed at the proper hour. Nevertheless in many cases the employer has a certain moral responsibility for these evasions of the law, although they appear to indicate perversity on the worker's part. Girls and women are indirectly set to compete one with another, and with boys and men. There is a constant pressure on the weaker to keep pace with the stronger, the immature or old with the worker in the full flower of strength. The overlooker usually receives a small percentage on all the earnings of all the weavers, and has therefore an incentive to keep them at full tension, and the overlooker's average is again criticised by the manager. Lancashire people are remarkably articulate and also quick in apprehension, and the sarcasms

launched at girls who, on pay-day, have earned less than the average are pointed enough to be well understood. The whole system is like an elaborate mechanism to extract the last unit of effort from each worker, and dismissal hangs always over the head of the slower and less competent worker. In the Factory Inspectors' Report for 1913 Miss Tracey tells how children lose their colour and their youthful energy in the drudgery of their daily toil, how the girls fall asleep at their work and grow old and worn before their time. "Sometimes one feels that one dare not contemplate too closely the life of our working women, it is such a grave reproach." I have myself been seriously assured that cases of suicide result from the difficulty of maintaining at once the quantity and quality of work under such conditions.

Anaemia is a frequent result of overstrain, not to mention the constant colds and rheumatism due to overheated rooms. The sickness among women from these and other worse evils alluded to above have become apparent for the first time through the serious strain put on sick benefit funds in the first year of the Insurance Act. At one very important centre of the cotton trade, out of 8056 members 2800 received sick benefit in the first twelve months. The Insurance Act, whatever its defects, has at all events given many poor women the chance to take a little rest and nursing that they sorely needed and could not afford. The sneer of "malingering" is easily raised, but it is doubtful whether real malingering has much to do with it. The conditions of industry, greatly improved as they are from the sanitary point of view, are certainly increasing the kind of strain that women are constitutionally least able to bear. The industrial efficiency in the

young girl that she and her employer are often so proud of may be paid for later in painful illness and incapacity. Mr. Arthur Greenwood quotes medical opinion to the effect that the industrial strain to which several generations of women in the textile districts have now been subjected is responsible not only for serious disease, but even for sterility among women.[1] So far the subject of the declining birth-rate has been discussed chiefly as a theme for homilies on the " selfishness " of women, who, it is alleged, prefer ease and comfort to unrestricted child-bearing. If Mr. Greenwood is right, the cause, in part at all events, is the force of capitalistic competition feeding on the very life of the people. Surely the subject needs medical study and investigation of a more searching kind than it has yet received.

The Exclusion of Women : A Counsel of Despair.— In view of the tremendous strain incidental to certain kinds of industrial work, as at present organised, there occurs the difficult problem, what kind of work women are to do. In the case of work underground in mines, and also of a few industrial processes specially injurious to women, the State has exercised the right to exclude women altogether, and however undesirable such legislative exclusion may be in the abstract, there can be little doubt that it was justified in the cases referred to, the evils being flagrant and the women concerned as yet unorganised and with no means of demanding adequate regulations for their own safety. There are even those who doubt whether woman should take part in manufacturing industry at all, and hope that ultimately she may disappear from it altogether. Those

[1] *School Child in Industry*, by A. Greenwood, p. 7. Workers' Educational Association, Manchester, price 1d.

who take this view should clear their minds as to what exactly they mean by industry. They probably do not wish to exclude women from those occupations which are almost a feminine monopoly, such as dress-making, needlework and household work. But to restrict any class of workers to a narrow range of occupations undoubtedly has a very depressing effect on their wages. We may also note that improvements in the position and conditions of the woman-worker have begun always outside, not inside; in the factory before the workshop; in the workshop before the home; in industry before needlework. The Wage Census of 1907 shows that women's wages are higher in the great industry than in the smaller and more old-fashioned establishment. State regulation of factory work in the first half of the nineteenth century led to enquiries into the condition of needlewomen and others, who, as the Children's Employment Commission showed, were in worse case than factory workers. The factory industry, it was immediately recognised, was more amenable to control either by the State or by Unionism, or both, than was the home worker, or the worker in small workshops. Through the factory, in spite of its many abuses, women have attained not only an improvement in their economic circumstances, but also the experience of comradeship and even of a citizenship which, although incomplete, is very real as far as it goes.

Women have undoubtedly gained on the whole by the widening of their sphere of employment. But women cannot possibly do all kinds of industrial work, and to leave the matter unregulated either by law or by Trade Union action is to leave too much to the discretion of the employer, with whom profit is naturally the first consideration.

If the matter is fought out between the employer and the men's Unions, the women's interests are not sufficiently considered. Some years ago at Birmingham the question was being disputed whether women should or should not polish brass in brass-works. The Trade Union pronounced polishing to be filthy and exhausting work, and degrading to women, and declared the employers only wanted to set women on it for the sake of cheapness. The employers on the other hand said the Union only opposed the employment of women because they wanted to keep women out of the trade as much as possible. Probably motives were mixed on both sides.

Such disputes not infrequently arise in manufacturing industry, and the middle-class person arriving on the scene is very apt to take a one-sided view. If he is a mildly reactionary, conservative, sentimental person, he probably wants women to be prevented from doing anything that looks uncomfortable and happens to be under his eyes at the moment. If he (or particularly if she) happens to be burning with enthusiasm for the rights of women as individuals and scornful of old-fashioned proprieties and traditions, he (or she) will most likely jump to the conclusion that the objections raised to the employment of women in the particular process are merely sex-prejudice and sex-domination. Neither the sentimentalist nor the individualist, however, sees the full bearing of the situation. In this connection an article by Mr. Haslam [1] may be studied with advantage as being eminently thoughtful and fair-minded. In the Lancashire cotton trade a peculiarly complicated instance of the woman question occurs in mule-spinning. In this, the best paid and

[1] See the *Englishwoman* for June 1914.

most highly skilled process in the industry, a shortage of boy labour has somehow to be met. The proportion of helpers or " piecers " needed is much larger than the proportion of boys who can hope to find a permanent occupation in mule-spinning. With advancing education, aided, no doubt, by recent good trade and demand for labour in the trades, boys and their parents have become increasingly aware of the disadvantages of " piecing " as a trade, and as a result the deficiency of juvenile labour threatens to become acute. An obvious solution is to introduce girls as piecers, which, as it happens, is not a new idea but the revival of an old one. Girls were formerly employed to some extent at piecing, but were prohibited by the Union twenty-six or twenty-seven years ago, so far as the important centres of cotton-spinning are concerned. The prohibition was removed some years later, but for a long time women showed no inclination to return to this work. Only in quite recent years, with the increasing shortage of boy-labour, have women and girls been induced to go back to the mule-spinning room. Now women never become mule-spinners ; the Union will not allow it. A peculiar feature of the occupation is that the operative spinners themselves, who employ and pay their piecers, are thus interested in obtaining a supply of cheap labour, just as any capitalist employer is, or supposes himself to be. They consistently oppose women becoming spinners, usually alleging physical and moral objections to this occupation, but are willing to allow them to become piecers in order to supply the deficiency of boy-labour, and to lessen the prejudice against piecing as a " blind-alley " occupation for boys. Now, as Mr. Haslam points out, the employment of women as piecers is both physically

and morally quite as objectionable as their working as spinners.[1] Indeed, granting for the sake of argument that women should be employed in the mule-spinning room at all, by far the least objectionable arrangement would be for them to work two together on a pair of mules, which would diminish the physical strain and obviate the moral dangers which arise from the present plan of subordination to a male spinner in an unhealthy environment. In this case women need organisation and combination to protect their interests from the operative spinners, who are virtually their employers, almost as much as a labouring class needs to be protected from capitalist employers. And, as Mr. Haslam shows in his weighty and temperate statement, it is quite true that there are very great and serious objections to female employment in this trade. The heat, the costume, the attitudes necessitated by this work, all render it a dangerous occupation for girls to work at in company with men. Mr. Haslam gives painful evidence in support of this statement, for which readers can be referred to his article.

The moral of the whole story is by no means that unrestricted freedom of employment for women is the way of salvation. Rather is it that women must not only organise but must take a conscious part in the work of directing their organisation. At present they are too often the shuttlecock between the opposing interests of the employer and the men's Union. It is not that the Trade Union is always wrong in wanting to keep the women out ; or that the employer (whether capitalist or operative) is always right in wanting to take the women on. The point is that each party in

[1] The work of a " big piecer " is practically identical with that of a spinner, only that responsibility rests with the latter.

these disputes is usually influenced mainly by his own interests and easily persuades himself that what is best for him is best also for the woman-worker concerned. The hardest and most unhealthy work may be done by women without a protest from men's Unions if it does not bring women evidently into competition with men. Nothing can clear up the situation but the enlightenment and better organisation of women themselves. They must learn not to take their cue implicitly from the employer or from the men's Union—certainly not from the teaching of women of another class. They must learn—they are fast learning—to think for themselves and to see their needs in relation to society as a whole, to become articulate and take part in the control of their organisation. It is quite likely that when they do so they will not adopt the ideal of complete freedom of competition.

I remember some years ago hearing a lecture on the subject of the mining industry given to a society of women of advanced views, the lecturer, a professional woman, taking the line that women should not have been excluded from work underground in mines, as they were by the Act of 1842, and that the evils of such work had been exaggerated. Some little time afterwards an experienced woman cotton-operative was invited to address the same society, and incidentally remarked in the course of her lecture that card-room work was " not fit for women to do." The contrast was instructive, especially taking into consideration that card-room work in the twentieth century, whatever its objections, cannot be nearly as dangerous and injurious as underground work in mines was in 1842. Legislative exclusion of women from dangerous and unhealthy occupations, is, we may admit, an un-

desirable remedy from many points of view—especially perhaps because it affords too easy relief to the conscience of the employer, who may take refuge in the idea that he need not trouble to improve conditions if he employs only men. It is better to make the conditions of industry fit for women than to drive women out of industry; better to strengthen the organisation of women and give them a voice in deciding what processes are or are not suitable to them than to increase the competition for home work.

It seems, however, highly improbable, from what one knows of the working woman's point of view and outlook, that as she becomes able to voice her wishes she will favour an indiscriminate levelling of sex-restrictions in industry; on the contrary, it seems likely that as she becomes more articulate and has more voice and influence in the organisation she belongs to, she will favour regulations of a fairly stringent nature in regard to the processes within an industry which may be carried on by women. Many of the observations that have been made on industrial women in recent or comparatively recent years show that although at times they are driven by stress of need to compete with men or to do work beyond their strength, yet that they regard themselves mainly from the point of view of the family and believe that to keep up the standard of men's wages is as important as to raise their own.[1]

The Middle-Class Woman's Movement.—There is, however, a complication between the labour woman's movement and the woman's movement for enfranchisement and freedom of opportunity generally, and great care is necessary to avoid confusing the issues. The

[1] See Cadbury Matheson and Shann, *Women's Work and Wages*, p. 212; Macdonald, *Women in the Printing Trades*, p. 53.

labour woman's movement is a class movement in which solidarity between man and woman is all important. The women's rights movement aims at obtaining full citizenship for women; that is to say, not only the Suffrage but the entrance to professions, the entrance without special impediments to local governing bodies and, generally, the abolition of belated and childish restrictions that hinder the development of personality and social usefulness. Now these two movements are not in principle opposed, and there is no reason why the same women should not take part in both, as in fact many do. The opposition consists rather in a difference of origin and history. The labour movement is born of the economic changes induced by the industrial revolution, and tends towards a socialistic solution of the problem. The women's rights movement is the outcome of middle-class changes, especially the decreasing prospect of marriage, which, together with the absence of training and opportunity for work, has produced a situation of extreme difficulty. The middle-class woman's agitation was inevitably influenced by the ideals of her class, a class largely engaged in competitive business of one kind or another. Equality of opportunity, permission to compete with men and try their luck in open market, was what the women of this type demanded, with considerable justification, and with admirable courage. The working woman, on the other hand, the victim of that very unrestricted competition which her better-off sister was demanding, before all things needed improved wages and conditions of work, for which State protection and combination with men were essential.[1]

[1] See in Chapter IVA. pp. 162-3. Frau Lily Braun's views on the subject.

There is, however, no fundamental opposition between these movements. Just as the working classes are striving through Syndicalism to express a rising discontent, not only with the economic conditions of their work, but also with the fact that they have no voice in its regulation and control, so women are striving, not only for political freedom and economic betterment, but for a voice in the collective control of society. Women have, until very lately, been left out from the arrangement even of matters which most vitally concern them and their children. The following incident in the history of the Factory Department will illustrate this fact. In 1879 the then Chief Inspector of Factories, Sir Alexander Redgrave, discussed in his annual report a tentative suggestion for the appointment of women inspectors that some person or persons unnamed had put forward. With the utmost kindliness and gentleness he negatived the proposal altogether, first on the assumption that the inspection of factories was work impossible for women and "incompatible with (their) gentle and home-loving character"; secondly, on the ground that in regard to the sanitary conditions in which women were employed "it was seldom necessary to put a single question to a female," and consequently there was no need to appoint women inspectors.[1] Thirteen years later came the Labour Commission. At that time it was unheard of for women to be appointed on Commissions, even when the subject was one in which women were most chiefly concerned. It is said, and I see no reason to doubt the statement, that the Labour Commission of 1892 did not at first intend even to hear evidence from

[1] See an article by the present writer in the *Englishwoman*, April 1911.

women witnesses as to conditions in which women were employed. Having yielded to the urgency of two women who were working hard at the organisation of sweated workers in the East End and demanded to be heard, the Commission, as an afterthought, appointed women Assistant Commissioners, whose researches and reports subsequently led to the appointment of women Factory Inspectors—sixty years after the first appointments of men. Any one who is likely to read this book will probably be already aware that women factory inspectors had no sooner been appointed than they very speedily were informed of flagrant sanitary defects in factories and workshops which had been suffered to continue simply because no woman official had been in existence, and men, with the best intentions, did not know what to look or ask for. The exclusion of women had involved in this case not merely a narrowing of the field of opportunity for professional women—a comparatively small matter—but a scandalous neglect of the elementary decencies of life for millions of women and girls in the working-class. It is unnecessary here to do more than remind my readers that until lately women were excluded also from local governing bodies which control the health, education, and conditions of life and work of women and children.

Men are not alone to blame for this state of affairs. If women have long been excluded from posts in which their services were greatly needed, it is very largely because of the ideals set up by the women themselves. The wretched education given to girls in the Victorian era, the egotistic passion for refinement which made it a reproach even to allude to the grosser facts of life, much more to the perils and dangers run by women in a lower class, all this was due quite as much to the influence

of women as of men. It was not surprising that men of the upper classes, accustomed by their mothers and wives to believe that for women ignorance and innocence were one, and that no painful reality must ever be mentioned before them or come near to sully their refinement, should recoil from the idea of trusting them with difficult duties and responsible work. It is to the few pioneer women like Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, and others who came out and braved reproach—from women as well as men—that we owe the introduction of worthier social ideals.

The New Spirit among Women.—As the women's movement draws towards the labour movement, as it is now so rapidly doing, it tends to lose the narrow individualism derived from the middle-class ideals of the last century. Mere freedom to compete is seen to be a small thing in comparison with opportunity to develop. The appeal for fuller opportunity is now stimulated less by the desire merely to do the same things that men do, more by the perception that the whole social life must be impoverished until we get the women's point of view expressed and recognised in the functions of national life. On the other hand, the women Unionists, who have long been taxed with apathy and lack of interest in their trade organisation, are drawing from the women's movement a new inspiration and enthusiasm. Observers in Lancashire tell you that there is a new spirit stirring among the women. They are no longer so contented to have the Union efficiently managed for them by men ; they want to take a conscious part in the work of organisation themselves. The same movement is visible in the plucky and self-sacrificing efforts for solidarity made by the workers in trades hitherto unorganised ; and, at

the other end of the social scale, in the deep discontent with the life of parasitic dependence which has been so powerfully expressed in the *Life of Florence Nightingale*, and in Lady Constance Lytton's book on *Prisons and Prisoners*.

The Potential Changes the Industrial Revolution carries with it.—We have endeavoured to analyse the changes effected in the position of women by the industrial revolution. Social changes, however, take a long time to work themselves out, and many features in the position of the woman-worker at the present day, as we have seen, are the result not so much of the industrial revolution as of the status and economic position of women in earlier times, and still more of the neglect of the governing classes to take the measures necessary for the protection of the people in passing through that prolonged crisis which may be roughly dated from 1760 to 1830. Let us now try as far as possible to free our minds from the influence of these disturbing factors and ask ourselves what are the potential changes in the position of the working woman effected by the industrial revolution, and what improvement, if any, she might expect to achieve if those changes could work themselves out more completely than social reaction and hindrances have yet permitted them to do. Let us, in short, pass from the consideration of What Is to the contemplation of What Might Be.

1. *By the use of mechanical power, the need for muscular strength is diminished, and greater possibilities are opened up to the weaker classes of workers.*—We are accustomed to view this change with disfavour, because it often takes the form of displacing men's labour and lowering men's wages. But that is mainly

because we see things in terms of unorganised labour. With proper organisation we should not see women taking men's work at less than men's wages; we should see both men and women doing the work to which their special aptitudes are most appropriate, each paid for their special skill. We should not see women dragging heavy weights or doing laborious kinds of work which are dangerous and unsuitable to them; we should see them using their special gifts and special kinds of skill, and paid accordingly. There is no reason, save custom and lack of organisation, why a nursery-maid should be paid less than a coal-miner. He is not one whit more capable of taking her place than she is of taking his. For generations we have been accustomed to assume that any girl can be a nursery-maid (which is far from being the truth), and from force of habit we consider the miner has to be well paid because his occupation demands a degree of strength and endurance which is comparatively rare, and also because he has the sense to combine and unfortunately the nursery-maid so far has not. The factory system is doing a great deal for women, directly by widening the field of occupation open to them, and indirectly by heightening the value of special aptitudes, some of which are peculiar to women. When mechanical power is used, strength is no longer the prime qualification for work, and the special powers of the girl-worker come into play.

The factory system, also, by its immensely increased productivity, is altering the old views of what is profitable, and a new science of social economics is evolving which would have been unthinkable under the old régime. In Miss Josephine Goldmark's recent most interesting book, *Fatigue and Efficiency*, she has gathered

together the results of many experiments made by employers to ascertain the effects of shorter hours. There is practical unanimity in the results of these experiments. Obviously there must be a limit to the degree in which shortening hours of work would increase the output, but no one appears yet to have reached that limit. In the Factory Inspectors' Report for 1912 many cases are mentioned where employers have voluntarily reduced hours of work and find that they, as well as their work-people are benefited by the change. In one case of a large firm which had formerly worked from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. it was arranged to cease at 7, a decrease of a whole hour, which necessitated engaging extra hands, but at the end of the year it was found that the annual cost of production was slightly diminished and the output considerably increased. Others expressed an opinion that 8 to 6.30 was "quite long enough," and that if these hours were exceeded the work suffered next morning. The same may be said in regard to other improvements in working conditions, such as ventilation, cleanliness, the provision of baths, refectories, medical aid, means of recreation; those who have taken such measures have found themselves rewarded by increased output. Even from the commercial standpoint we do not appear to have nearly exhausted the possibilities of betterment. There can be little doubt, judging from existing means of information, that if the whole of the industry of the country were run on shorter hours, higher wages, and greatly improved hygienic conditions, it would be very much more productive than it is. From the social point of view such betterment is greatly needed, especially in the case of the young of both sexes, whose health is most easily impaired by over-strain, and who are

destined to be the workers, parents, and citizens of the next generation.

2. *Status.*—A still more important result of the industrial revolution is *the changed status of the wage-earner.* Here it appears to me that women have profited more than men. Broadly speaking, men, whatever their ultimate gain in wages, lost in status through the industrial revolution. The prospect of rising to be masters in their own trade, though not universal, was certainly very much greater under the domestic system of working with small capital than under the modern system of large concentrated capital. In this respect women did not lose in anything like the same proportion as did men, because they had very much less to lose. The number of women who could rise to be employers on their own account must have been small. No doubt a larger number lost the prospect of industrial partnership with their husbands in the joint management of a small business. But for women wage-earners the industrial revolution does mean a certain advance in status. The woman-worker in the great industry sells her work per piece or per hour, not her whole life and personality. I shall perhaps be told indignantly that the poor woman in a low-class factory or laundry is as veritable a drudge as the most oppressed serf of mediaeval times, and I do not attempt to deny it. But we are here discussing potential changes, not the actual conditions now in force. The drudgery performed by women under the great industry is of the nature of a survival, and results from the fact that women can still be got to work in such ways for very low wages. These conditions are largely the heritage of the past and can be changed and humanised whenever the

women themselves or society acting collectively makes a sufficiently strong demand.

Nor must it be forgotten that in modern industry women have a further advantage in being paid their own wages instead of being merely remunerated collectively in the family, as was often the case formerly. Modern industry thus holds for the woman-worker the possibility of a more dignified and self-respecting position than the domestic system of the near past.

3. *The Possibilities of State Control.*—We next note that *the industrial revolution has led to State control,* and that the Factory Act, whatever its defects in detail and its inadequacy to meet the situation, has greatly improved the status of the woman-worker by giving her *statutory rights against the employer.* This aspect has often been overlooked by leaders of the women's rights movement, who at one time tended to regard factory legislation as putting the woman in a childish and undignified position. But the true inwardness of the Factory Act is the assertion that workers are *persons,* with rights and needs that are sufficiently important to override commercial requirements. It has not only aided the progress of industrial betterment, but it has taught women that they are of significance and importance to the State, and has brought them out of the position of mere servility. A great deal more may be effected in the future when the governing class attain to more enlightened views of civics and economics, and when the women themselves become politically and socially conscious of what they want.

4. *Association. The factory system has also made it possible for women to strengthen their position by association and combination.*—Such association affords women the best opportunity they have ever yet had of attain-

ing economic independence on honourable conditions. And it is interesting to note that just as women are now awakening to social consciousness, and beginning to feel themselves members of a larger whole, so the Trade Unions are now reaching out to issues broader than the mere economic struggle, and are beginning to give more attention to social care for life and health. In the past the Unions have very largely taken what might be termed a juristic view of their functions. They have been concerned mainly with wage-questions, with the prevention of fraud through "truck," oppressive fines and unfair deductions; they have penalised backwardness in the improvement of machinery. As the management of a cotton mill concentrates on extorting the last unit of effort from the workers, so the Unions in the past have very largely concentrated on securing that the workers at any rate got their share of the results. But in more recent years the Unions are beginning to see that this, though good, is not enough. Industrial efficiency may be too dearly bought if it involves a loss of health, character, or personality, and recent reports of the cotton Unions show that the officials are increasingly aware of the seriousness of this matter from the point of view of health. *E.g.*, the heavy rate of sickness among women-workers disclosed by the working of the Insurance Act has turned the attention of the Weavers' Amalgamation towards the insanitary conditions in which even now so many operatives do their work. "Fresh air, which is such an essential to health, is a bad thing for the cotton industry; what is wanted is damp air, and calico is more important than men and women. When they are not well they can come on the Insurance Act. We want to talk less about malingering and

more about insanitary conditions, which is the real cause of excessive claims." [1] Just as the woman's movement is widening its vision to understand the needs of labour, so the Unions now are widening theirs to understand the claims of life and health. The officials are already alive, if unfortunately the Lancashire parents are not, to the evils of the half-time system. And the co-operation of women in the active work of the Union will strengthen this conviction.

The Future Organisation of Women.—As women come more and more into conscious citizenship they will, as Professor Pearson prophesied twenty years ago, demand a more comprehensive policy of social welfare. We may expect in the future that the care of adolescence and the care of maternity will be considered more closely than it ever has been ; also that such social provision for maternity as may be made will be linked up with the working life of women, so that marriage shall not be penalised by requiring women against their will to leave work when they marry, and on the other hand, that the home-loving woman of domestic tastes shall not be forced, as now so often happens, to leave her children and painfully earn their bread outside her home.

One of the great obstacles in the way of attaining such measures of reform has been, not only the comparative lack of organisation of women-workers but the difficulty of adapting existing organisations, devised for the trade purposes of the workers at a single industrial process, to these broader social purposes. The majority, as we have seen, in Chapter III., leave work on marriage, and the problem results, how to bridge

[1] Northern Counties Amalgamation of Weavers, etc. Report for July 1913.

the "cleft" [1] in the woman's career and give her an abiding interest in organisation. How, the old-fashioned craft organiser asks with a mild despair, how is he to organise reckless young people for whom work is a meanwhile employment, who go and get married and upset all his calculations? How are women, whose work is temporary, to be given a permanent interest in their association? For some women, no doubt, their work *is* a life-work, but it is most unlikely it will ever be so for the majority. Mr. Wells's idea, shared with the late William James, of a kind of conscription of the young people to do socially necessary work for a few short years has a curious applicability to women. There are certain distinct stages in a woman's life which the exigencies of the present commercial society fit very badly. One can foresee a society arranged to do more justice to human needs and aptitudes in which girls might enter certain employments as a transition stage in their careers; then marry and adopt home-making and child-tending as their occupation for a period; then, when domestic claims slackened off in urgency, devote their experience and knowledge of life to administrative work, social, educational, or for public health. Other women with a strong leaning to a special skilled occupation might prefer to carry it on continuously. Different types of organisation will be needed for different types of work. If the craft Union cannot fit all types of male workers, much less can it fit all women. Trade Unionism as we have known it mostly presupposed a permanent craft or occupation, and one of the great troubles of Trade Unions for women

[1] I owe the suggestion of a "cleft" (*Spalte*) in the woman-worker's career to Madame E. Gnauck-Kühne, who developed it in her book, *Die deutsche Frau*. Compare "Statistics of Women's Life and Employment," *Journal of the Statistical Society*, 1909.

is that so many women do not aspire to a permanent occupation. The "clearing-house" type of Union suggested by Mr. Cole to accommodate workers who follow an occupation now in one industry, now in another, might possibly be adapted to meet the needs of women. Perhaps a time will come when the Unions that include the "woman-worker" will be linked up with societies like the Women's Labour League or the Women's Co-operative Guild, whose membership consists mainly of "working women," that is to say of women of the industrial classes who are not themselves earners.

These speculations may seem to run ahead of the industrial world we now know. But all around us the Trade Unions are federating into larger and larger bodies, and when these great organisations have attained to that central control and direction they have been feeling after for generations, they will certainly discover that it is essential for them to develop a considerable degree of interdependence between the Trade Unions and consumers' co-operation. Therewith they can hardly fail to grasp the latent possibilities of the membership of women. The woman is much less an earner, much more a consumer and spender than is the man; she is more interested in life than in work, in wealth for use than in wealth for power. She suffers as a consumer and a spender both when prices go up and when wages go down. It is difficult to believe that the working classes will not before long develop some effective organisation to protect themselves against the exploitation that is accountable, in part at least, for both processes. Mrs. Billington Greig's masterly study of the exploitation of the unorganised consumer is a demonstration of the need of awakening some collective

conscience in a specially inert and inarticulate class, and Miss Margaretta Hicks is making most valuable experiments in the practical work of organising women as consumers. The supposed apathy and lack of public spirit in women has been largely due to the lack of any visible organic connection between their industrial life as earners and their domestic life as spenders and home-makers. Probably the future of the organisation of women will depend on the degree in which this connexion can be made vital and effective.

PART II

CHAPTER VI.

WOMEN'S WAGES IN THE WAGE CENSUS OF 1906.

By J. J. Mallon.

Until a few years ago no statistics comprehensive in character relating to women's wages were available. In 1906, however, the Board of Trade took "census" of the wages and hours of labour of the persons employed in all the industries of the country, and the result has been a series of volumes which, though becoming rapidly out-of-date, nevertheless throw much light on the general level of wages in various trades and occupations.

The enquiry made by the Board of Trade was a voluntary enquiry: that is to say, it was left to the public spirit and general amiability of the employer to make a return or not as he pleased. There was no penalty for failure to furnish information. The response to the Board of Trade efforts was not, however, unsatisfactory, and returns were forthcoming, roughly speaking, in respect of nearly half the wage-earners employed in the different industries. Unfortunately, however, the fact that the authorities were dependent for their information on the goodwill of the employers

has probably given the statistics a certain bias. The schedules supplied were somewhat forbidding in appearance, and often troublesome to fill in, and it may fairly be surmised that it was the good rather than the bad employers who put themselves to the trouble of complying with the official request. Hence of all the workers employed in the United Kingdom it was probably those who were more fortunately placed in regard to whom we now have statistics. The condition of those working for employers who thought that the less said about their wages-sheets the better, still remains obscure. The statistics upon which comments are now offered may therefore convey a more favourable impression than the facts, if fully known, would justify, especially when it is remembered that 1906, the year of the census, was one of good trade. On the other hand, it needs to be borne in mind that since the enquiry was made, the level of wages in many trades is known to have been raised.

The Earnings and Hours of Labour Enquiry, as it was officially called, was directed primarily to ascertaining for each of the principal occupations in the various trades what were *the usual earnings or wages of a worker employed for full time in an ordinary week*, the last pay week in September being the particular week suggested subject to the employer's view as to its normality.

With a view to supplementing or checking the details of actual earnings in a particular week, information was also sought with respect to the *total* wages paid in an ordinary pay week in each month, and also with respect to the total wages paid in the year. From this last-mentioned body of information it is possible to deduce some tentative conclusions in regard to the

extent to which the industry suffers from seasonal variations. This matter will be further considered below. It is, however, mainly the information in regard to full-time earnings in an ordinary week with which it is proposed to deal. Statistics, it may safely be assumed, are abhorred of the general reader; but they are the alphabet of social study and cannot be dispensed with, and certain tables must now be introduced showing the relative wage level for women in a number of important industries. It should be noted that the abstract "woman" who is dealt with in the statistics is a female person of eighteen years of age or over. She may be, though is not likely to be, a new recruit or learner. She may, on the other hand, be very old and infirm, though here again the probabilities are against it. In all cases, however, she works full time, which roughly we may regard as being about fifty to fifty-two hours a week.

The following table shows the average weekly full-time earnings of women employed in the principal textile industries. In addition to the average, which may of course be a compound of a great many widely differing conditions, the proportion or percentage of women whose earnings fall within certain limits is also shown.[1]

[1] Earnings and Hours Enquiry: Textile Industries, Cd. 4545, 1909; Clothing Trades, Cd. 4844, 1909.

TABLE A

Industry.	Percentage numbers of women working full time in the last pay-week of September 1906, whose earnings fell within the undermentioned limits.			Average earnings for full time.
	Under 10s.	10s. and under 15s.	15s. and over.	
				s. d.
All textiles .	13·3	38·8	47·9	15 5
Cotton . .	3·0	20·9	76·1	18 8
Hosiery . .	14·5	44·4	41·1	14 3
Wool, worsted .	10·7	55·6	33·7	13 10
Lace . . .	18·1	49·3	32·6	13 5
Jute . . .	6·2	66·4	27·4	13 5
Silk . . .	38·9	47·8	13·3	11 2
Linen . .	41·7	49·1	9·2	10 9

The cotton industry stands out conspicuously as showing a relatively high level of earnings, and we find in marked contrast to the other trades in this group that only 3 per cent of the women earned less than 10s. a week. The results coincide of course with popular impression, it being well known that the mill lasses of Lancashire are the best paid—probably because the best organised—large group of women workers in the country.

The woollen and worsted industry, like the cotton, is localised, being confined mainly to Yorkshire, though the woollen industry of the lowlands of Scotland is also important. In this trade the results are much less satisfactory, the average being 13s. 10d., and considerably more than half the total number employed earning less than 15s. It may be noted, however, that in one town, Huddersfield, where women and men are

engaged largely on the same work, the average, 17s. 1d., is considerably higher than that for the United Kingdom.

Hosiery is also strongly localised, the majority of the workpeople being employed in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and certain neighbouring parts of Derbyshire. It will be seen that in order of average earnings this industry stands next to, though a good distance from, cotton, the average being 14s. 3d. The best-paid centre is Leicester itself, where the average is 16s. 2d. Even in this relatively highly paid trade, however, more than half of the women earned less than 15s., and it should be noted that this result applies to factory workers only. In the hosiery trade a considerable amount of homework is also carried on, and though statistics are not at present available, it may safely be assumed that earnings in the homework section of the trade are less than in the factory section.

At the bottom of the list is the linen industry. The average here is only 10s. 9d. ; less than one-tenth of the women employed earned more than 15s., while between one-third and one-half earned less than 10s. The industry, as is well known, is centred mainly in the North of Ireland, but is also carried on to a considerable extent in Scotland and to a small extent in England. The figures for Ireland, however, are not markedly lower than those for the other districts. It is true that for the whole of Ireland outside Belfast the average is only 9s. 9d., but the figure for Belfast itself, namely 10s. 10d., coincides with that for England.

The manufacture of jute is carried on almost entirely in the neighbourhood of Dundee. The average is therefore a local average.

The other industries require no special comment.

The second large group of trades, important from

the point of view of women's employment, is the clothing industry. Although the averages in this group do not show the extremes of the textile group, the industry is nevertheless one in which a great variety of skill and remuneration prevails. The following are the statistics, certain of the smaller trades such as silk and felt hat-making and leather glove-making being omitted for the sake of brevity :—

TABLE B

Industry.	Percentage numbers of women working full time in the last pay-week of September 1906, whose earnings fell within the under-mentioned limits.			Average earnings for full time.
	Under 10s.	10s. and under 15s.	15s. and over.	
				s. d.
All clothing . .	21·6	45·1	33·3	13 6
Dress, millinery, etc. (factory) .	12·6	39·5	47·9	15 5
Tailoring (bespoke) . .	15·4	42·4	42·2	14 2
Dress, millinery, etc. (workshop)	28·0	36·2	35·8	13 10
Shirt, blouse, underclothing, etc. . . .	22·2	46·0	31·8	13 4
Boot and shoe (ready-made) .	12·4	58·9	28·7	13 1
Tailoring (ready-made) . .	24·0	46·6	29·4	12 11
Laundry (factory)	20·5	52·0	27·5	12 10
Corsets (factory) .	28·8	48·3	22·9	12 2

It will be seen that the dress, millinery and mantle-making group is divided into two according to whether the place of manufacture is a workshop or factory.

For this purpose a workshop means a place where mechanical power is not used, and a factory a place where such power is used. The distinction also roughly corresponds to the difference between ordered or bespoke and ready-made garments, ordered garments being made principally in workshops, and ready-made garments principally though not so exclusively in factories. This being the case it may perhaps be surprising that the average for the workshop section, namely 13s. 10d., is so appreciably below that for the factory section, namely 15s. 5d., and the statistics in this respect serve to indicate that the introduction of mechanical power and other labour-saving devices into industry by no means implies that from the point of view of wages the workers employed will be any worse off.

The workshop section of the dress, etc., trade is almost entirely a woman's trade, the number of men and boys being insignificant. Within the trade itself a considerable range of earnings exists. Fitters and cutters form the aristocracy of the profession, but one which is recruited from the humbler ranks. The average earnings for the United Kingdom of those who "lived out" amounted to 33s. 5d., and of those who "lived in" 27s. 9d.

The practice of "living in" and being provided with full board and lodging, or at any rate being provided with partial board, is a feature of this section of the trade, some 2500 women and girls out of 40,000 included in the returns being noted as receiving payment in kind in addition to their cash wages.

Another feature of the trade is the relatively large number of apprentices or learners who received no wages at all, 8·7 per cent of the women and girls in

the dressmaking trade, 43 per cent of the milliners, and 17 per cent of the mantle-makers being so returned. These, of course, would be mostly under eighteen years of age, and their inclusion in the statistics would not affect the average given in the table for women. Considering the general level of earnings which the statistics disclose, one can only conjecture that, as in certain men's professions, the existence of a few well-paid posts exercises an attraction to enter the trade, the strength of which is out of all proportion to the chance of obtaining one of these prizes.

Factory dressmaking is at present a relatively small but at the same time rapidly-growing group. Being confined mainly to the production of ready-made clothes the process of cutting is capable of being standardised and systematised in such a way that the degree of skill required is much less than that looked for in the highly-paid cutter and fitter of the "made-to-order" workshop. The other processes also tend to conform to a certain uniform standard of skill. Hence the range of earnings is much less wide than in the workshop section of the trade, though as before noted the general level is higher. It should also be observed that while time-work is the usual method adopted in the workshops, payment by piece is very common in factories, and the detailed statistics furnished in the official report make it clear that this method gives the diligent and rapid worker a distinct advantage. It is worth noting that the group showing the highest earnings is that of hand or foot machinists on piece work. In the dress and costume section the average was 16s. 2d., and in the mantle section 17s. 8d., as compared with 15s. 5d. for all women. Statistics also indicate that the fluctuations of employment are much less extreme in the factory

than in the workshop section of the trade, and on the whole, therefore, it is probably not a matter for regret that the factory-made article is tending to displace that of the workshop. That the process of displacement is rapid is indicated by the fact that while, according to returns made in connection with the Factory and Workshop Acts, the employment of women in dress, millinery and mantle-making factories increased by 16 per cent between 1904 and 1907, the numbers employed in workshops diminished by 7 per cent. The change from the one system to the other does not always imply a change of workers or even of premises. The introduction of an electric motor to drive some of the sewing-machines is sufficient to alter the denomination of an establishment from workshop to factory; though at the same time it is probable that such an innovation would not take place unless some alteration in the general method or organisation of work were also contemplated.

The tailoring trade has many points of contact with the dress and mantle-making trade which has just been reviewed. It too is divided with some sharpness into a made-to-order or bespoke, and a ready-made section. The distinction does not imply perhaps quite so clear a division between factories and workshops, though in this trade also it may be taken as broadly true that the bespoke is the workshop and the ready-made is the factory section. In this connection one interesting point of contrast is presented by the statistics, for it will be seen that while, as before noted, the factory section of the dress and mantle-making trade showed a higher general level of earnings than the workshop section, the reverse is true of the tailoring trade. This is probably due principally to two facts. The

first is that while the work in the bespoke shop is usually skilled, it does not necessitate any exceptionally well-paid work such as that done by cutters and trimmers in the dressmaking establishment. The cutting and other highly-skilled work is done by men, so that women enter the trade without the inducement afforded by the chance, however small, of rising to 35s., £2, or even £3 a week which is offered by the dressmaking workshop. It is probable, moreover, that the small dress and mantle-making shop enjoys a certain reputation of " gentility " which is less marked in the tailoring establishment, and finds its equivalent in higher wages. The second fact is that the processes of simplification and subdivision which broadly are the characteristics of factory as distinct from workshop methods can be carried further in the manufacture of men's suits than in that of ladies' dresses and costumes, so that the general level of skill requisite to the factory worker is somewhat lower in the one case than in the other. We thus find that while the average in tailoring workshops is 14s. 2d. as compared with 13s. 10d. in dressmaking shops, the average in tailoring factories is 12s. 11d. as compared with 15s. 5d. in dressmaking factories.

Since the statistics were compiled minimum rates have been fixed under the Trade Boards Act to apply to the ready-made and wholesale bespoke sections of the tailoring trade, and there is no doubt that with the minimum rate of 3¼d.[1] an hour, fixed for Great Britain, statistics relating to the present time would show a marked improvement on those relating to 1906, since a *minimum* rate of 3¼d. probably implies in most cases an average rate of 3½d. or even 3¾d. Moreover,

[1] Raised to 3½d. on 19th July 1915.

on the testimony of employers themselves the introduction of a minimum rate has had a stimulating effect on the trade, bringing about on the part of employers a vigilance and alacrity to make improvements in organisation, which have had an effect on the efficiency of the workers and consequently on their earnings, so that in many cases the Trade Board minimum has become merely a historical landmark left behind on a road of steady progress.

So far as the 1906 figures are concerned it will be seen that the average for the United Kingdom in the bespoke section was 14s. 2d. The detailed statistics show that London was the highest-paid district, with 16s. 2d., and Ireland the lowest, with 12s.

As ladies' costume-making has points of contact with men's tailoring, so the tailoring trade merges almost imperceptibly through various gradations of linen and cotton jackets, overalls, etc., into the shirt-making trade, and this again is closely combined, and, indeed, for statistical purposes forms one group with the manufacture of blouses and underclothing.

The shirt, blouse and underclothing trade has become a factory trade to a much more marked extent than either dressmaking or tailoring. By tradition shirt-making is the sweated trade *par excellence*. But, as in many other instances, tradition has outlived the fact, the statistics showing that while the average earnings, 13s. 4d., are low absolutely, the trade is nearer the top than the bottom of the clothing trade list, notwithstanding the fact that the manufacture of shirts is combined for the purpose of the statistics with that of articles, such as baby linen, in respect of which the wages are almost certainly much lower than those for men's shirts. It should be noted, however, that

the wages of home-workers are nowhere included in the statistics.

The boot and shoe trade, unlike most of the others in the clothing group, is mainly a man's trade, considerably more than half of the total number employed being males. Women are employed chiefly as machinists or upper closers, or as fitters in both cases, being concerned with the manufacture of the top or upper. The trade is carried on in many centres, the principal being, perhaps, Leicester, Northampton, Kettering, Bristol, Norwich, Leeds, and Glasgow. The highest earnings of women are recorded for Manchester, the average being 17s. 6d., and the lowest for Norwich, where the average is only 10s. 6d. It is worth noting that the high average for women in Manchester is combined with a relatively low average for men, namely, 27s. 8d.

The laundry trade gives employment to a large number of women, the Factory Returns for 1907 showing that 61,802 were employed in laundries using mechanical power, and 26,012 in laundries where such power was not used. For the whole of the United Kingdom the averages for power and for hand laundries were practically the same, being 12s. 10d. in the one case and 12s. 9d. in the other. In the case of power laundries Ireland is at the bottom of the list with an average of 10s. 4d., and the best-paid districts, namely, London, show an average of only 13s. 6d. A recent attempt to bring the power laundry industry within the scope of the Trade Boards Act has failed, the employers opposing the Provisional Order mainly on the ground of certain alleged technical defects of definition.

Of other trades in which women are largely employed the following selection may be made forming a somewhat miscellaneous group.

TABLE C

Industries.	Percentage number of women working full time whose earnings in the last pay-week of September 1906 fell within the undermentioned limits.			Average earnings for full time.
	Under 10s.	10s. and under 15s.	15s. and over.	s. d.
All paper, printing, etc., trades	26·5	52·2	21·3	12 2
Bookbinding	19·3	55·4	25·3	12 10
Printing	28·0	49·2	22·8	12 3
Cardboard, canvas, etc., box manufacture	24·7	55·1	20·2	12 3
Paper stationery manufacture	30·4	49·5	20·1	11 11
Paper manufacture	25·9	55·8	18·3	11 11
All pottery, brick, glass, and chemical	31·0	49·7	19·3	11 10
Explosives	32·3	35·0	32·7	13 1
Soap and candle	24·3	50·5	25·2	12 5
Porcelain, china, and earthenware	29·0	50·0	21·0	11 11
Brick, tile, pipe, etc.	25·7	64·4	9·9	11 5
All food, drink, and tobacco	37·8	44·2	18·0	11 5
Tobacco, cigar, cigarette, and snuff	31·1	46·0	22·9	12 0
Cocoa, chocolate, and sugar confectionery	40·5	37·2	22·3	11 9
Preserved food, jam, pickle, sauce, etc.	44·4	43·0	12·6	10 11
Biscuit making	33·6	53·5	12·9	10 10
Aerated water, etc., manufacture and general bottling	54·8	42·7	2·5	9 7

TABLE C—*continued.*

Industries.	Percentage number of women working full time whose earnings in the last pay-week of September 1906 fell within the undermentioned limits.			Average earnings for full time.	
	Under 10s.	10s. and under 15s.	15s. and over.		
				s.	d.
Miscellaneous . .	..	..	..	12	4
Umbrella, parasol, and stick making . .	10·1	38·5	51·4	15	7
Portmanteau, bag, purse, and miscellaneous leather manufacture	20·3	56·3	23·4	12	8
India-rubber, gutta-percha, etc. . .	14·7	68·3	17·0	12	8
Saddlery, harness, and whip manufacture .	37·5	55·7	6·8	10	7
Brush and broom .	47·0	42·5	10·5	10	6

Of the above trades, cardboard box-making, sugar confectionery, jam-making, and food preserving come within the scope of the Trade Boards Act, and for these occupations minimum wages have been fixed. The jam and food preserving trade showed in 1906 the low average for women of 10s. 11d., 45 per cent of the women employed earning less than 10s. and over 26 per cent less than 9s. for a full week. This trade is also remarkable for heavy seasonal fluctuations.

By whatever standard the average weekly earnings of women in the trades which have been noted are judged, the outstanding conclusion is that they are generally low to a degree which suggests a serious social problem. Averages of less than 13s. are frequent in all three Tables which have been presented, and the

reader should be again reminded that these averages are for women over eighteen years of age working a *full* week. Girls and also women working short time have been excluded. For the sake of brevity, details have not been given in many cases of the percentages of women earning wages between certain stated limits. But it needs to be recognised that an average suggests wages which are below as well as above that figure. Generally it may be stated that where an average is given, from 40 to 50 per cent of the women employed earn wages at less, and in many cases at very much less than the average.

Various attempts have been made to calculate the minimum sum required by a woman living independently of relatives to maintain herself in decency and with a meagre degree of comfort. The estimates point to a sum of from 14s. 6d. to 15s. a week as the minimum requirement, and this assumes that the worker possesses knowledge, which she has probably in fact had no chance to acquire, of how best to spend her money and satisfy her wants in the order not of her own immediate desires, but of their social importance. At present prices the minimum would be 17s. or 18s.

In the light of this estimate we may note that in the clothing trade group, for example, 25·9 per cent of those returned earned less than 10s. per week, and applying this percentage to the total number as shown by the Factory Returns to have been employed in this particular industry in 1907, namely, 432,668, we arrive at the conclusion that no fewer than 111,681 women were in receipt of wages which, measured by a not very exacting standard, were grossly inadequate.

The figures with which we have been dealing are, however, those for a week of full time. No allowance

has been made for sickness or holidays, and what is more important, short time or slackness.

Almost every trade fluctuates throughout the year, and in many cases this fluctuation is considerable. For example, in the Dress, Millinery (workshop) Section the wages paid in the month of August were only 78 per cent of the monthly average, or, for London alone, 66 per cent. Though short time in one month is partially offset by overtime in another, there is but little doubt that in most trades and in most years the balance comes out on the wrong side, and, properly studied, the Wage Census volumes reveal the fact that unemployment and short time are important factors when considering women's wages from the point of view of the maintenance of decent conditions of living.

In many respects the wages for a full-time week which we have so far been considering are indeed an artificial figure. High weekly wages in a trade where there is much slackness may obviously be less than the equivalent of low wages in a trade where conditions are steadier. If we are to consider wages in relation to the needs of the worker, therefore, it is the year rather than the week which should be taken as the unit. For many reasons, however, earnings *per year* are extremely difficult to determine, and nothing more than an approximation is practicable.

Dr. Bowley's[1] method is to compare the full-time weekly wage multiplied by fifty-two with the total wage bill for the year, divided by the number employed in the busiest week: that is, the week when it may be assumed that all persons dependent on the trade will be employed except those who are prevented by ill-

[1] *Elements of Statistics*, 2nd edition, pp. 37, 38, and 39.

health. Supposing, for example, the total wages bill in a certain trade were £400,000, and the number of persons employed in the busiest week were 16,000. The average amount per person per year would be £25 as compared with, say, £29 : 5s., which represents 52 times an assumed full-time weekly wage of 11s. 3d. We can thus say in this supposititious case that the yearly earnings of the workers in fact equal only $52 \times \frac{25}{29\frac{1}{4}}$, or 44 weeks at the full-time weekly wages.

Owing to certain gaps in the statistical information these results are subject to certain qualifications of a nature somewhat too technical to enlarge upon in such a book as this. They may be accepted, however, as substantially establishing the fact that overtime does not in general counterbalance short time and slackness, and that in the foregoing review of earnings on the basis of a full-time week we have been dealing with figures which are distinctly rosier than the facts warrant.

The Movement and Tendencies of Women's Wages

A retrospect of women's wages based on such data as are available confirms the view that, low as is the present level, the movement is nevertheless in an upward direction.

In the cotton trade, employing more than half the women in all textile trades, women's wages have risen continuously throughout the period of which we have information. Mr. G. H. Wood, F.S.S., who has made the movement of wages his special study, estimates that taking the general level of women's wages in 1860

as 100, the level in 1840 would be expressed by 75 and in 1900 by 160, so that in the period of sixty years covered by these figures women's rates of wages would appear to have increased by more than 100 per cent. Though perhaps not so considerable, a similar movement has occurred in other trades, and it is interesting to note that in Mr. Wood's view women's wages have risen relatively more than men's. Unfortunately, however, the statistics which are available, and on which his conclusion is based, do not include the great clothing and dressmaking industry which, from the point of view of women's employment, is so important. An enquiry on the lines of the 1906 Census was indeed attempted in the year 1886, but the results are meagre. It may be noted, however, that comparison of the results with those for 1906 tends to show that in some branches of the clothing trades wages declined. This fall in the rate of wages, if such a conclusion is justified, is, however, probably to be regarded as an exception to the general tendency as exhibited in the cotton and certain other trades.

The occupation of women in many fields of employment with which they are still principally associated, such as spinning and the making of clothes, is probably as ancient as the industries themselves. The employment of women as wage-earners in such work is, however, comparatively recent. As a member of a family, or as a servant or retainer, woman has worked for generations in many tasks which formerly were, but now, with the increased specialisation of industry, have ceased to be, part of the ordinary routine of domestic activity. From this condition it was an easy transition to the frequent employment of women to assist in their master's craft, or in the

deliberate production for sale of a surplus of articles beyond what were required for family needs.

It was probably not until the factory system developed, however, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, that women were employed to any considerable extent as wage-earners in industry, and even when they were so employed there was an intermediate stage in which it was not unusual for the father or head of the family to appropriate their earnings and apply them as he pleased. Gaskell lamented the fact that the custom was creeping in of paying individual wages to women and children, thinking that it would break family ties. Though it still sometimes happens that members of a family work together in mills, Gaskell's fears were undoubtedly justified. Family ties, however, are of many kinds, and it is probably not correct to assume that the disintegration of the family as a producing or industrial unit indicates a relaxation of these emotions of affection, loyalty, and responsibility which spring to mind when the family is regarded in its social and ethical relationships.

The fact must, moreover, be noted as bearing directly upon the chief problem of women's wages that although the family as a producing unit is no longer of considerable importance, as a spending unit it exercises a fundamental influence on the industrial system. From the point of view of food, lodging, medicine, and other items of expenditure, a person is more interested as a rule in the collective income of the family group to which he belongs than in his own individual contribution. Many mining districts in which men can earn large wages show a low wage level for women, while in such a district as Hebden Bridge, where, as the phrase goes, it pays a man better to have daughters than sons,

the opposite condition prevails. In both cases the wages are influenced, broadly speaking, by the standard of comfort of the family rather than by that of the individual.

If it were the invariable rule for a worker to belong to a family group, and if families were uniform as regards the number and sex distribution of their members, there would be no great cause to regret the influence of the collective family budget upon wages. But conditions are not uniform, and in districts or trades in which the wage level is largely affected by the presence of women whose fathers and brothers are relatively well-to-do, the position of a woman living alone in lodgings is apt to be a hard one. Where a father earns enough to maintain his family in reasonable comfort, the daughters going to work in a factory may be willing to accept wages no more than sufficient to provide them with clothes and pocket-money, but quite inadequate to afford their workmate who is living independently a sufficient livelihood.

These considerations are closely connected with the question whether, in estimating what is a fair wage for a woman, we should proceed on the basis of a woman living alone in lodgings, or whether we should admit as a proper consideration the fact that in many cases the woman would live with her parents and family, and would have the advantage, if not of assistance from them, at least of that economy in expenditure which the family group represents.

Statistics as to the number of women who live independently are difficult to obtain, and it is doubtful whether such women form the majority of those employed. It may be granted, however, that in certain districts and certain trades the proportion is

small, and in these cases it might be asked whether we should not ignore the type which is exceptional and consider the wages paid on the basis of actual rather than hypothetical needs. This, it may be argued, is already done in the case of children or young persons, in connection with whom the question is never asked whether the wages paid are sufficient to maintain them independently.

The answer appears to be clear, though it brings us up against certain moral considerations. It may be true that the women in a certain industry or town, in spite of low wages, are all in fact well nourished and comfortable, members as they are of families which as families are well-to-do. Great as may be the respect which kinship deserves, it is submitted, however, that no normal woman should be compelled by economic exigencies to live with persons towards whom she has not voluntarily undertaken responsibilities, and that the freedom which economic independence implies is a right to which every woman willing to work may properly lay claim.

Even, therefore, though we dismiss from consideration the great number of women who have no choice but to live entirely on their own earnings, there are still grounds on which the position can be maintained that the single woman living alone with reasonable frugality is the proper test by which, from the point of view of what is right and desirable, wages should be measured.

It should be noted, moreover, that the issue is not solely between women who live alone and women who are partly supported by their families. There are also the women who have dependents. According to the 1911 population Census over one-fifth [1] of occupied

[1] 1,091,202 out of a total of 4,830,734.

women were not single, but married or widowed, and many of these doubtless have children to support. The Fabian Women's Group enquiry showed that about half the women workers canvassed had dependents. The Labour Commission of the United States, in course of investigating the condition of women and child wage-earners, found that in a group of 300 families 43 per cent of the family income was contributed by unmarried women over sixteen.[1] Again, Miss Louise Bosworth, in a study of *The Living Wage of Women Workers*, published in 1911, found that " the girls working for pin-money were negligible factors." So far from girl workers being mostly supported at home, it appears that in many cases the earnings of the single daughter or sister living with her family, small as they are, are an important element in the family income.

It has been shown in the previous section that even in the relatively well-paid women's trades there are large numbers of adult women in receipt of wages which are scarcely compatible with mere physical existence, much less a decent and comfortable life. Men's wages, even in low-paid trades, are usually sufficient to enable a man who has not undertaken family responsibilities—which after all are entirely voluntary—to obtain a sufficiency of food and warmth. The remuneration of working-class women are in the majority of cases, however, barely adequate to satisfy this austere standard. We naturally ask, therefore, why this difference should exist.

The occupations in which men and women are indifferently employed are relatively few in number.

[1] *Women's Industrial News*, July 1912, p. 56; compare *The War, Women and Unemployment*, published by the Fabian Society.

Even where men and women are employed side by side in the same trade they are usually engaged on different processes. The points where overlapping occurs are, however, sufficiently numerous to enable us to make the generalisation that in those industrial processes in which both men and women are employed the efficiency or output of the man is greater than that of the woman worker. In other words, the man is *worth* more, and his higher wages are an expression of this fact.

Even where the man's dexterity or skill is no greater than that of the woman's his wages still tend to be greater. Usually if an employer can get both men and women workers he is prepared to pay somewhat more to a man even though the man's output per hour is no greater than that of a woman. Put bluntly, a male worker is less bother than is a female worker. A female staff is always to some extent an anxiety and a source of trouble to an employer in a way that a male staff is not, and to many employers it has the great defect of being less able to cope with sudden rushes of work. Men are, after all, made of harder stuff than women, and only in the grossest cases do we ever give a thought to men being overworked. With women, however, not only the Factory Act, but also decent feeling requires an employer to be vigilant to see that undue strain is not placed on them.

The greater remuneration of men in those occupations where both men and women are employed on the same processes is then due to the fact that the men are preferred to women, and employers are accordingly willing to pay more to get them.

Such occupations, however, probably form the exception rather than the rule, and we have to consider the cases where there is apparently no sex competition

whatever. The nursery-maid wheels the baby's perambulator on the pavement; the mechanic drives his motor van in the road. They do not compete for employment in any sense. Generally, indeed, custom has indicated with a fair degree of preciseness what are men's occupations and what are women's. Why, then, in distinctively women's occupations should the wages paid be lower than men's? The answer is not easy, but the key to the problem is to be found in the broad statement that the field of employment of women is much more restricted than that of men. Hence the competition of women for employment reduces their general wage level to a lower point than that of men, or, as an economist would put it, the marginal uses of female labour are inferior to those of male labour.

What is needed, therefore, is an enlargement of the sphere in which women can find employment; not, be it noted, an increase merely in the number of occupations, but in the *kinds* of occupations. Pursuit of this end will no doubt raise questions regarding the displacement of male labour, but it is fortunate that in many cases woman's claim would be most strenuously contested in respect of those occupations which are least suited to her, and which she ought not to enter. The need of discrimination must be emphasised. An excursion to the black country should convince even the most ardent feminist that at the present time tasks are permitted to women which from every point of view—their dirtiness, their arduousness, and the strain which they impose on certain muscles—are entirely unsuitable. It would be folly to increase the number of such tasks. Attention should be directed to those occupations in which womanly characteristics would have their value, and in which a woman would not be

physically at a disadvantage. It is to be hoped that public sentiment would then be the ally rather than the enemy of the movement. The displacement of male typists by female typists, and the larger employment of women in clerical occupations, and as shop assistants, to say nothing of the introduction of women officials in the sphere of local and central government, undoubtedly represent an advance in the right direction. Paradoxical as it may seem, an effective means of enlarging the field of women's activities might be found in the awakening of public feeling against employments which are unsuitable. The process of analysis and comparison which is implied by criticism of such employments would undoubtedly indicate directions in which women's work could be utilised more satisfactorily. This is a consideration of paramount importance in view of the opportunities and necessities to which the present war has given and will give rise. It is for those who influence public opinion to see that in the readjustment of the economic relationship between men and women reasonable discrimination is exercised.

The prohibition of the employment of women on unsuitable work, combined with educational effort which would make women capable of better and more responsible work, would give women-workers access to many kinds of employment from which they are practically excluded at present. Much that is unsatisfactory and regrettable in industrial life is the result of sheer inertia and drift, and many an employer would find new and cleaner and more remunerative methods of employing women if stimulated by the law and encouraged by an ability on the part of the women to respond to new methods. The principle of the Factory

Acts, and of the minimum wage, requiring a minimum of safety or comfort and of remuneration, should be reinforced and strengthened not merely for the sake of its face value—great though it is—but also for the sake of its stimulating effect on the management of businesses and its consequent tendency to increase remuneration. At the same time an attempt should be made to encourage in girls some sense of craftsmanship and loyalty to their callings, so that their organisation in trade unions or guilds would become possible. With a few exceptions collective bargaining and the collective maintenance of a standard of remuneration are, as regards women's employment, merely sporadic and intermittent. It is the young woman, the irresponsible immature untrained amateur worker, without an industrial tradition to guide her, who is the despair of organised labour. The irresponsibility and indifference to organisation which she displays are, as often as not, due to the fact that her employment may not afford a decent livelihood, and that she is forced to look forward to and seek marriage as the only way out of an impossible life. But it is also true to say that her inadequate wages are due to her irresponsibility and indifference. There is inextricable confusion between cause and effect—a vicious circle which can only be broken by patient methods of training, helped by the initial impulse of a legal minimum wage and a legally prescribed standard of general conditions.

CHAPTER VII[1]

THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

The Shock of War.—The great European War broke out in the summer of 1914.

The shock was felt at once by trade and industry. July ended in scenes of widespread trouble and dismay. The Stock Exchange closed, and the August Bank Holiday was prolonged for nearly a week. Many failures occurred, and there was at first a general lack of confidence and credit. Energetic measures were promptly taken by the Government to restore a sense of security, and unemployment among men during the ensuing year was much less than had been anticipated. Unemployment among women was for a time very severe. For this unfavourable position of women there are several reasons.

In the first place, any surplus of male labour was met at once by a corresponding new demand for recruits and the drafting of many hundreds of thousands of young men into the army, aided by the rush of

[1] This chapter was prepared during the first year and the early part of the second year of war. It is necessarily incomplete, as war is still raging; but it is hoped that a brief summary of the position of women-workers in war time, and of the expedients adopted to ease and improve it, may not be without interest.

employment in Government factories and workshops, served to correct the dislocation of the male labour market. Women were unfortunate in that the cotton trade, by far the largest staple industry in which a majority of the employees are women, was also the trade to suffer the greatest injury by the war.

The Cotton Trade.—Employment had begun to be slack some time previously, and the cutting off of the German market was naturally a considerable blow. Exact statistics are almost impossible to obtain, as the numbers of looms stopped or working short time varied from week to week; but figures collected for the week ending October 3 show that between 58,000 and 59,000 members of the Amalgamated Weavers' Association were out of work, and over 30,000 were on short time. At Burnley, over half the looms were stopped; at Preston, over a third. In November, when things had greatly improved, about 36 per cent of the looms were still standing idle.

The amount of short time, or "under-employment," was also very considerable, as is shown by the fact that the reduction in earnings exceeded the reduction in numbers employed. The following table is taken from the *Labour Gazette*, December 1914, and shows the state of employment in the principal centres of the cotton trade. The figures include men as well as women; but as women predominate in the industry, they may be considered as a fair index to the women's position.

WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 28, 1914, COMPARED WITH SAME MONTH IN PREVIOUS YEAR.

Districts.	Decrease per cent in Numbers Employed.	Decrease per cent in Amount of Earnings.
Ashton	17·6	26·2
Stockport, Glossop, and Hyde	11·6	22·0
Oldham	8·4	17·5
Bolton	2·6	13·5
Bury, Rochdale, etc.	7·4	17·7
Manchester	3·3	15·5
Preston and Chorley	14·6	31·7
Blackburn, etc.	18·0	40·9
Burnley, etc.	4·3	47·6
Other Lancashire towns	15·4	32·0
Yorkshire towns	13·0	20·1
Other districts	11·2	20·6
Total	12·1	27·1

In all these districts women would be affected much the same as men, and would be out of work in about the same proportion, but as women form a majority of the occupation, a much larger number of women were in distress and were without any resource comparable to that open to the men of recruiting age. In these circumstances the funds of the Unions suffered a terrible strain. The workers' organisations were faced with the dilemma whether to pay stoppage benefit to members with a generous hand, in which case they ran the risk of depleting their funds and losing the strength necessary for effective protection of the standard of life ; or, on the other hand, to guard their reserve for the future and leave many of their members

to suffer distress with the inevitable result of loss of health and efficiency.

As the winter 1914–15 wore onwards unemployment in the cotton trade gradually became less acute, but for several months the suffering of the operatives must have been considerable.

Some other Trades.—In London the position was of course extremely unlike that of Lancashire, but we again find the women suffering heavily, and (but for comparatively a few) without the support and assistance of a union. At the first news of war, dressmakers, actresses, typists, secretaries, and the followers of small "luxury trades" (toilet specialities, manicuring, and the like) were thrown out of work in large numbers. Not only in London, but in the country at large, the following trades were greatly depressed: dressmaking, millinery, blouse-making, fancy boot and shoe-making, the umbrella trade, cycle and carriage making, the jewellery trade, furniture making, china and glass trades. In some cases the general dislocation was intensified by a shortage of material due to war: the closing of the Baltic cut off supplies of flax from Russia, on which our linen trade largely depends. The closing of the North Sea to fishers stopped the curing of herrings, which normally employs thousands of women, and both the chemical and confectionery trades suffered from the stoppage of imports from Germany.

The Board of Trade's Report on the State of Employment in October 1914 gave the reduction of women's employment in London as 10·5 per cent in September, 7·0 per cent in October. But this estimate was for all industries taken together, some of which were in a state of "boom" owing to the war, and it is

certain that the occupations referred to above must have suffered much more heavily than the average. Many girls spent weeks in the heart-sickening and exhausting search for employment. In November the dressmaking, mantle-making, and shirt- and collar-making were in a worse condition than in the previous month, although trade generally had improved.

The Woollen and Clothing Trades.—In these trades the war brought a veritable "tidal-wave" of prosperity. The industrial centres of our Allies were to a considerable extent in the hands of the enemy; thus, not only new clothes for our regular troops and reserves, and uniforms for the new armies that were shortly recruited, but also those for the troops of our Allies were called for in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The woollen towns of this district became the busiest places in the world, and orders overflowed into Scotland and the somewhat decayed but still celebrated clothing region of the West of England.

The first expedient to cope with the enormous pressure of orders was to relax the Factory Act. In normal times no overtime is allowed in textile industries to workers under the operation of the Act (viz. women, girls under eighteen, boys under eighteen, and children), and employment is limited to ten hours a day. In view of the tremendous issues involved, permission was given to employ women and young persons for two hours' overtime. The results, as it turned out, soon showed, however, that overtime is bad economy, for the number of accidents increased greatly in the period of greatest pressure, and averaged one a day in the December quarter, and the secretary of the Union also reported that the period during which

these very long hours were worked coincided with a remarkable increase of illness among the operatives involved. Probably one-third more cases were on the Approved Societies' books during December than in September and October.[1] Although the women rose most pluckily to the occasion and did their heavy task cheerfully in the consciousness of supplying their country's need, it is certain that many were taxed beyond their strength, and in January 1915 the overtime permitted was reduced to nine hours weekly. The women, when they complained, complained not of overwork but of insufficient pay. An increase of 1½d. per hour during overtime was asked, and considering the strain involved, seems a far from excessive demand; but the trade is unfortunately much less well organised than the cotton trade, and female workers—73 per cent of the whole—could not in most districts enforce this claim. Khaki is more trying to the operatives than some other kinds of cloth to which they are better accustomed, and it is more difficult to weave. Even with overtime work the women did not earn much more than they would working usual hours on ordinary cloth. The wages paid appear to have been, as so often is the case with women's work, chaotic. Many employers honourably paid a fair or recognised price; others took advantage of the weakness of the workers to pay rates not far from sweating prices. In the clothing trade the Government was conscientiously paying handsome rates to contractors for the making of uniforms, but without effectively enforcing the payment of fair wages to

[1] Article by G. H. Carter, *Economic Journal*, March 1915; see also Notes in the *Women's Trades Union League Review*, January 1915.

labour by the contractors. Hence even the Trade Board minimum—a low standard, especially considering the rise of prices—was successfully evaded by some firms.[1]

Maladjustment and Readjustment. — The question may well be asked, why women should suffer unemployment in war-time at all. War produces an urgent demand for a great deal of the work women are best fitted to do, such as nursing, the making of clothes and underclothes, the manufacture of food stuffs and provisions on a large scale, the organisation of commissariat and hospitals, the collection and overlooking of stores. In point of fact, the requirements of the troops, as we have seen, provided increased employment for some women, though probably not for nearly as many as those who suffered from the shrinkage of ordinary trade at the beginning of the winter; later on the demand became so great that there was an actual scarcity of women workers in many trades.

One strange feature of those autumn months of 1914 was that while recruits were continually to be seen marching in plain clothes, without a uniform, numbers of London tailors and tailoresses were without employment. Many of the recruits were also, at first at all events, unprovided with needful elementary comforts, and amateurs were continually pressed to work at shirts and knitting for them. Women employed in the manufacture of stuffs or clothing for the troops or in certain processes of the manufacture of armaments or appurtenances were overworked, while other women were totally or partially out of work.

[1] Article by Jas. Haslam, *Englishwoman*, March 1915, and information given privately.

The characteristic immobility of labour was perhaps never more clearly seen.

It may be admitted of course that a wholesale transference of workers from the area of slump to the area of boom would never be possible all at once. The machines necessary for special work will not at first be forthcoming in numbers sufficient to meet a demand suddenly increased in so enormous a proportion. Then, again, a new demand for labour is usually a demand predominantly for young workers, and the older women thrown out of work may find it very difficult to adapt themselves to new requirements. Skill and practice in the handling of machines are necessary; machines differ very greatly. A dressmaker cannot, off-hand, be set to make cartridges or even uniforms. In some branches of industry a high degree of specialised skill may be a positive disadvantage in acquiring the methods of an allied but lower skilled trade; *e.g.* it has been found that tailors and tailoresses who have become expert in the handwork still largely used for the best "bespoke" work, the aristocracy of the trade, cannot easily adapt themselves to the modern "team work" tailoring, in which division of labour and the use of machinery play a considerable part; they may even impair their own special skill by attempting it.[1] In some processes a delicate sensitiveness of finger is a first essential for the work, and the operatives dare not take up any rough work which might impair this delicacy, their stock-in-trade and capital. Again, the difference of wage-levels in different industries is a cause of immobility of labour. Lancashire cotton workers might have adapted themselves without much

[1] See article by C. Black in the *Common Cause*, February 12, 1915.

difficulty to the processes of the Yorkshire woollen trade, but they could not have accepted the rates current in an imperfectly organised trade, and there would have been obvious difficulty in paying imported workers at a scale higher than those enjoyed by the local operatives.

A good deal of dovetailing, however, can be done to bring the work to the workers or the workers to the work, and much more could have been done if the Local Government Board had taken the question of unemployment more seriously in the years preceding the war. But the local bodies were uninstructed, and in many cases had little idea of anything better than doles. In spite of the funds collected, there can be little doubt that much suffering, especially among women, was neglected and let alone, and the irregular payment of separation allowances at the beginning of the war added to the distress.

Voluntary effort, it needs hardly saying, was instantly ready to do its best to meet the occasion. The Suffrage Societies, in especial, did splendid work in improvising employment bureaux and relief workrooms for the sufferers. A special fund and committee were also formed, under the style of the Central Committee for Women's Employment, to find new channels of employment for women. This Committee was presided over by the Queen, and was aided in its labours by specialists highly versed in industrial conditions, and its efforts for adjustment are full of interest.

The primary aim of this Committee was to equalise employment in factories and workshops. The problem was how to achieve the adaptation, as far as possible, of unemployed firms and workers to new and urgent national needs. It had been supposed that only certain

special firms could make army clothing, and that the numerous women and girls thrown out of work in ordinary wholesale tailoring would be unable to do unaccustomed work. A business adviser of the Committee suggested to the War Office authorities some simplifications in the make of military greatcoats and uniforms. The experiment was tried, with the result that many thousand great-coats and uniforms were made by firms which under the dominance of red tape must have stopped work. In the shirt-making, also, much unemployment occurred at first, and the Committee gave information to firms not previously employed by Government that they could apply for contracts. Carpet-yarn factories were utilised for the supply of yarn to satisfy the enormous demand created by the war. Numbers of orders for shirts, socks, and belts were placed in dressmakers' work-rooms, and carried out by women whose normal occupation had failed them.

Another field of this Committee's work was to stimulate the introduction of new trades and open new fields of work for women wage-earners. This is a difficult undertaking at a time when spending power must be much curtailed, but it may be destined to have good results in happier times, and in any case any widening of the field of employment for women, any development of their technical skill, is much to be welcomed.[1]

Besides these deeply interesting attempts at regulating and adjusting the market for skilled labour, there remains the vast army of the unskilled. Here we had during the first winter of war the influence of a new idea working, the perception that something better than

[1] *Westminster Gazette*, October 16, 1914.

relief work, something infinitely better than charity, was possible. In some of the workrooms started by voluntary effort orders were obtained for underlinen, toys, etc. On a small scale there need be no great objection to this if the educational factor were prominent, but it is necessary to point out that no real adjustment of the labour market is effected by inducing ladies to make purchases in a workroom that they might otherwise have made in an ordinary shop, the employees of those shops probably themselves suffering from shortage of employment. The workrooms started under the Central Committee for this class of workers adopted the plan of setting them to make useful articles, not for sale but for distribution among the poor, such as layettes for infants and clothing for necessitous mothers, also to the mending or remodelling of old clothes, the manufacture of cradles from banana crates, and so forth. In most workrooms a good meal was provided in the middle of the day, and some of the women were instructed in its cooking and service.

The leading idea of workrooms on these lines is that temporarily the workers should be taken off the labour market altogether, that they should be paid not wages but relief, and that the relief should be robbed of its degrading associations by being combined with a system of training the women to do something they could not do before, or at all events to do it better than before. The requirement of attendance at the workroom (usually for forty hours weekly) was a guarantee of genuine need. This method of dealing with the problem of distress is probably as satisfactory as any that could be devised off-hand, though the workrooms did not escape criticism on the score of attracting girls

away from "normal employment."[1] This is no doubt possible, the scale of women's wages in "normal employment" being still unfortunately so low. Ten shillings a week would not attract workers away from decently paid work done under decent conditions. The criticisms, however, point to the desirability of such arrangements being carefully co-ordinated to avoid overlapping, especially with the technical training provided by the Education Authority.

Although the working of the plan was good as far as it went, it went unfortunately only a little way. By the first week in November a couple of dozen centres of employment had been started, and perhaps 1 per cent of the unemployed women had been provided with work in the workrooms.[2] There were besides uncounted thousands whose work and wages were reduced to a mere fraction of what they had previously been. Had the local authorities been already educated by the Local Government Board to take a broader view of their responsibilities and more scientific measures in discharging them, a great deal more of the ground might have been effectively covered. It is to be hoped that if similar measures are needed after the war, as seems likely to be the case, the experience of 1914–15 will bear fruit.

The New Demand for Women's Labour.—With the continuance of war an unexpected situation gradually shaped itself. The clothing and accoutrement of the great army that was speedily recruited, as well as urgently-needed supplies for France, and for Russia, so far as they could be transported thither, created a huge

[1] See a letter by Mr. A. J. Mundella, L.C.C., in the *School Child* for December 1914.

[2] *New Statesman*, November 7, 1914.

demand for labour, and by December the shortage of skilled labour was a serious problem. More especially was this the case with the munitions group of trades, which became the largest and busiest of all. With some lack of foresight too many men from these industries had been allowed to enlist, and eventually some were even brought back from the front. Thousands of women poured into armament making; factories have been adapted to meet the new demands; trade union rules and legislative requirements have been considerably relaxed; women to a limited extent are replacing men. These are some of the outstanding features of a situation which is already bewildering in its complexity.

The shortage of skilled workers which has formed and still forms so serious a difficulty in supplying the army, is due not only to the enlistment of skilled men, but also to the tendency which the past thirty years or so have unfortunately shown to be increasing, for the displacement of the skilled by the unskilled worker. The ignorance of parents and the attraction of the "blind alley" occupations for the children of poor homes, where every shilling counts, combined with the organisation of business primarily for profit and the inadequacy of social safeguards in this matter, have created a difficult position. The lack of training and experience is, however, much more general among women than among men, and has formed a serious obstacle to their employment. The replacement of men by women in manufacturing industry has thus been less than might have been expected. Women have to a considerable extent replaced men in commercial and clerical work, in some occupations in and about railway stations, also as shop assistants, lift-attendants, etc. There are even suggestions that

the underground railway service of London might be entirely staffed with women; but up to the time of writing this has occurred only to a limited extent. There has of course been an enormous increase in women's employment, but a large part of the war demand is for goods on the manufacture of which women normally predominate, as clothing, food-stuffs, etc. Another large part of the demand is for work on such processes as the filling of shells, and is now swollen to an unparalleled degree. What has happened has been that subdivision of processes and grading of labour have been introduced, as well as mechanical adjustments to facilitate the employment of women. As usually happens when women are introduced to a new trade or branch of a trade, the work is more or less changed in character. No doubt the pressure of war conditions has had the effect that women are now performing processes that were previously supposed to be beyond their strength or skill or both, especially in leather, engineering, and the wool and worsted trades. The line of demarcation between men's and women's occupations is drawn higher up. But women have not to any great extent replaced men in the skilled mechanical trades, the immediate and insurmountable obstacle to such replacement being their lack of skill and training. In certain trades, however, where women have been given opportunity and facilities to undertake work involving judgment and skill, they have, aided by the stimulus of patriotism, shown both intelligence and initiative, revealed unexpected powers on processes hitherto performed by men, and done work "of which any mechanic might be proud" (see report mentioned below; compare the *Engineer*, Aug. 20, 1915).

The lack of training therefore may perhaps explain the very small results that have so far followed from the appeal to women to register for war-work, made by the Government in March 1915. As to the origin of this appeal, little is definitely known. It may have been intended as a recognition of the efforts and sacrifices already made by women during the war. It may have been, as some suggest, probably not without foundation, that the measure was instigated by the Farmers' Union, in the hope of getting cheap labour on the land instead of raising the wages of men. The women's organisations were not consulted, and even the Central Committee on Women's Employment, then anxiously engaged in reviewing and where possible adjusting the dislocation of women's employment, had, we believe, no previous notice of the appeal. A very small proportion only of the women who registered were called upon to work within the next few months ; only three or four thousand out of 80,000. This small result is said to be due to the fact that only a very small proportion were capable of the skilled jobs awaiting them.[1] In great part the new demand for labour has been met by the overflow from other industries, though it has been supplemented by the addition of voluntary workers of the class usually termed " unoccupied," that is to say, not working for wages. There are obvious risks in bringing women from the upper and middle classes into a labour market the conditions of which are usually much against working-women ; on the other hand, such an arrangement as was made, *e.g.* that amateurs should train so as to replace ordinary working women for the week-end,

[1] *Report on Outlets for Labour after the War*, British Association, Section F., Manchester, 1915.

seems an admirable device to use the superfluous energies of the leisured so as to give the workers time for rest and recuperation.

Another problem arising out of the present extension of women's employment relates to the enormous strain imposed upon the women and the inadequate pay they have in many cases received. We have touched on this point above in connection with the wool and worsted trades. Incidentally these conditions show that the unorganised state of women prevents their taking full advantage of the labour market even when the position is strategically in their favour. In some of the processes on which women have been introduced the skill required is quite considerable, and the output varies, depending greatly on the worker's health and strength. High speed cannot be maintained without proper intervals of rest ; prolonged fatigue reduces capacity. The prime conditions for a persistently high output are a scientific adjustment of hours of work, adequate food, ventilation, and necessary comforts. These facts in the twentieth century are not unknown, but in war-time they were practically ignored. Many of the women on war-work were grievously overworked, and though praised for their patriotism in working overtime, did not receive wages sufficient to afford them the extra nourishment and comforts they should have had. In some cases, especially if doing men's work, they were highly paid ; in others the pay was not only below the standard of a man, but was inadequate to maintain the physical endurance required. The patriotic feelings of women-workers were shamefully exploited, and the state of mind revealed by persons who should have known better was deplorable. In one case of a prosecution

by the Home Office the magistrate refused to convict, although a girl under eighteen had been employed twenty-four hours without a break, after which she met with an accident.

Yet another problem arises out of the substitution of women for men. We have seen reason to suppose that this is taking place less extensively than is supposed, but it undeniably occurs, and may assume much greater proportions before the war is over.

Are women who replace men to be paid merely the wages that women of the same grade of skill usually are paid? In that case they will be undercutting men, and preparing a position of extreme difficulty after the war. Or are the women to be paid the same wages as the men they replace? They certainly should, wherever the work is the same. As we have seen, in many cases the women do not do exactly the same work as men, and indeed in the interests of their health and efficiency it is often highly desirable they should not do quite the same. It may be quite easy, *e.g.*, for a woman to cut off yards of cloth to sell across the counter, but it may happen that the man she replaces not only did this but also at intervals handled heavy bales of goods which are beyond her strength. In such cases as this a rearrangement of work with due regard to relative strength is desirable, and a rigid equality of wages should not be insisted on. Organisation of all women-workers employed to replace men is become a more pressing need than ever, to ensure first that women should not be paid less than men merely because they are women; second, that women should not have work thrust upon them that is an injurious strain on their constitutions; third, that the future interests of the men now serving in the field should not

be disregarded. The point insisted on in Chapter IV., that women need not only to be enrolled in Unions but to have a voice in the management and control where they are organised along with men, has been made plainer than ever. So strongly was this felt at Manchester that a special committee was formed for the protection of women's interests in munition work, and for co-operation with the interested trade unions in any movement towards the organisation of the women. A special campaign for the organisation of munition workers was initiated and carried on by the National Federation of Women Workers.

The Results the War may have.—It is impossible as yet to estimate what effects the war will ultimately have in modifying the position of women. The surplus of women, in itself a source of much social ill, will be increased ; the young girls of to-day have a diminished prospect of marriage. At the same time the spending power of the community must almost certainly be curtailed, and apart from military requirements there will be a less demand for women's work in many occupations. Thus at the very time that women will need more than ever to be self-dependent, their opportunities of self-dependence will be narrowed. Another aspect, a more hopeful one, is that the scarcity of men may improve the position of women and lead to their being entrusted with posts, not necessarily identical with those of men, but more responsible and more dignified than those women have usually filled. Objections of a merely conventional nature are likely to disappear. It seems also possible that the present shifting of women's employment out of the luxury trades that ebb and flow according to fashion and idle caprice, into Government service and trades vitally

necessary to national existence, may remain after the war, only that women's energies may then, as we hope, be turned once again to save life rather than destroy it.

There are signs that a deeper and more intimate consciousness of society as a whole may operate in favour of women. The recruiting campaign, for instance, may induce certain reflections. Between 1891 and 1900, 781,475 male infants died under a year old in England and Wales alone, making an average death-rate of 168 per thousand births. If even the very mild measures for the improvement of sanitation and the care of infants and nursing mothers that have been adopted in recent years had been customary twenty years ago, we should have now in England some hundreds of thousands more lads of recruiting age or approaching it than are actually here, and many of those who survived the high death-rate of those years would have escaped damage in early years and be stronger and finer men than they are. If we now adopted much more generous measures to the same end, we could probably save some hundreds of thousands more to serve their country in twenty years' time. And all this would cost an infinitesimal sum in comparison with what is now being poured forth to make these young men as strong and fit for the field as possible. The militarists, if they were consistent, would realise that at the back of the army stands another army—the army of the poor working women, underfed, overworked, badly housed, and insufficiently clad. The patriots, if they were more clear-sighted in regard to their own desires, would spend a great deal more time and energy in demanding, for the sake of military efficiency, that the conditions under which the nation's babies are brought

into the world and the mother nursed and nourished should be changed in a quite revolutionary manner. Some of us may not love this style of argument; the view of men as "food for powder" and women as mere feeders of the army may seem an ignoble one. Those who hold such views will, however, have to consider their implications more closely.

It was a curious coincidence, perhaps even not a wholly fortuitous one (who can say?), that in the very week preceding our declaration of war, when Europe was already resounding with the tramp of armed men and the rumble of artillery wheels, the Local Government Board should have issued its first memoranda on the subject of Maternity and Child Welfare. These circulars, addressed to County Councils and Sanitary Authorities, advocated a considerable extension of the work of Public Health Departments in the direction of medical advice and treatment for pregnant and nursing mothers and their infants, and an extensive development of the system of home-visiting of women and infant children already in existence in some places. Parliament has already voted a grant to the extent of 50 per cent of the cost in aid of local schemes for Maternity and Child Welfare. The immediate appeal of the War Relief Fund and the difficulties of its administration have, no doubt, combined with the inertia characteristic of many local authorities to efface any very bold initiative on the more fundamental but less clamant questions raised in the Local Government Board memorandum. Still, the fact remains that the needs of the woman and the young child have been at last recognised as vital, however inadequate the means taken to meet them have so far been. These needs will be urged by Women's Societies and by labour

organisations, and the war will have the effect of bringing them into stronger relief as time goes on, and may supply the impetus for a still more drastic scheme, on the lines advocated by the Women's Co-operative Guild.[1]

It is now recognised, or is coming to be recognised, that it is not alone the soldier who serves his country in war; the great part played by industry in building up the nation's life is equally vital. "Industry and commerce," writes Mr. Arthur Greenwood, "are not primarily intended as a field for exploitation and profit, but are essential national services in as true a sense as the Army and Navy." Such a recognition should have its effect in raising the woman's position, the special economic weakness of which is, that her value to the community is greater than any that can be measured in pounds, shillings, and pence, while nevertheless she, like others in a competitive society, is compelled to measure herself by competitive standards. During the war industrial women have been working day and night to supply military and naval requisites, taking their part in national defence as truly as if they could themselves aid in slaughtering the enemy, and not without considerable overstrain and damage to their own health and strength. Others, again, have spent their time and strength toiling to make good the deficiencies in Government organisation, not only for the relief of distress and unemployment, but even for the needs of recruits themselves. Working women in their homes

[1] See *The National Care of Maternity*, by Margaret Bondfield, published by the Women's Co-operative Guild. The proposals include the administration of Maternity Benefit by the Public Health authorities in lieu of the approved societies, the raising of maternity benefit to £5, and other changes.

bear a disproportionately heavy share of the burden of trouble and anxiety caused by the rise of prices in the necessaries of life. Vast numbers of women have offered up their sons and brothers in battle ; hundreds of thousands have lost their employment and been reduced to poverty and distress. The efforts and sacrifices made by women cannot have passed wholly unnoticed by the Government, and we may hope that some real development of the position of woman, especially of the working woman, will follow the hoped-for settlement of this terrible crisis.

Even the thoughtless sentimentality of the well-to-do leisured woman has been touched to finer issues. Impelled to "do something" for the soldiers, she turned instinctively to the traditional or primeval occupations of women, and wanted to make shirts, etc., with her own hands. She was, however, here confronted with the new idea that the needs of the unemployed working woman must be considered. In the autumn it was suggested those who could afford new clothes should order some to stimulate employment. In the spring and early summer, on the contrary, the utmost economy was advocated, capital being scarce. The most irresponsible class in the community were thus asked to realise themselves as members of society, to understand that philanthropy was not merely an opportunity for them to save their own souls, that even their personal expenditure was not a merely private matter, but that both must be considered in relation to the needs of the commonweal.[1]

Constructive Measures.—The experience of the war should certainly lead to some better-thought-out

[1] B. Kirkman Gray, *History of Philanthropy.*

method of dealing with times of stress and unemployment than has ever yet been in operation, especially with regard to women. It would be beyond the scope of this volume to draw up such a scheme in detail, but some points may be indicated. The need of better training has become plain. To raise the upper limit of school attendance is urgent, if education is to be worthy of the name. A better all-round training at school would give girls more choice of occupation, and would not leave them so much at the hazard of one particular process or trade. Develop a girl's intelligence, train her hand and eye, and she will be helped to master the technical difficulties of whatever occupation she may wish to follow or work she may need to do. For older girls special technical and domestic courses may be most valuable, especially if taught in such a manner as to occupy the mind and increase the capacity, and not as mere mechanical routine. It was noted during the boom of work for the army that girls who had been trained in a trade school could adapt themselves more readily to a new and unaccustomed process than could those who had only ordinary workshop training. As a further development of the education question the experience of 1914–15 should lead to the provision of increased facilities for physical exercise in the open air (and time to use them) for young people of both sexes. In the first winter of war we were all amazed at the change effected by a few months' training and fresh air, at the fine well-set-up young men who had lately been weedy clerks and pale-faced operatives. It may perhaps dawn upon us after the war that if the country can afford to satisfy the elementary needs of healthy life in young men when they stand a good chance of dying

for her, it might be worth while to do something of the same kind for those who are to live for her and make her future. Perhaps eventually even the physical health and soundness of girls may be held to justify some provision for exercise in the open air.

In the second place, the local authorities should at times of stress offer all the useful employment they possibly can find to women at fair rates of wages. The more genuine employment a municipal body can find for women in time of need the better, whether by anticipating work that would normally be wanted a few months later or by increasing the efficiency of special services, such as the educational or health services, district nursing, cleansing and sweeping of schools and other buildings. Why not organise a grand "spring cleaning" of neglected homes, with domestic help to aid the overtaxed mothers of families? Special investigation of particular industrial or sanitary conditions as to which information was needed might well be carried out at times when educated women of the secretarial and clerical professions are unemployed.

It is evident that we need a better scheme of Employment Bureaux for women. There should be a centre of information and a clearing-house where workers, found superfluous in their previous occupation, could be drafted into such new ones as they were capable and willing to undertake, and this might possibly be worked in conjunction with a system of training. The comparative success of the work hurriedly improvised, and with many difficulties, by the Central Committee on Women's Employment, is a clear indication that some similar organisation on a larger scale, say a National Advisory Council, linked

up with the Labour Exchanges and representative of women's organisations, might be infinitely valuable.

Another constructive movement that seems to be gaining ground is that for the organisation of women as consumers. At the end of Chapter V., written early in 1914, I ventured to prophesy that some such form of association would be needed as a complement to the work of organising industrial women-workers. In June 1915 a number of women's societies were engaged in forming an association to take measures to counteract the war scarcity and increase the supply of food, to extend agricultural and horticultural training for women, to improve the feeding of children in schools, to establish cost-price restaurants for the poor, and to urge the Government to form an Advisory Committee to deal with the whole subject and take steps to control the rise of prices, such a committee to include representatives of women householders.[1]

[1] *Daily News and Leader*, June 24, 1915. It may be remarked here parenthetically, though not strictly germane to the subject, that not only the local authorities, but the Departments, even the War Office itself, might utilise the services of professional women more freely than they do, with great advantage to themselves. Women have among other things a very sharp eye for the detection of fraud and corruption. It was to the initiative and energy of one woman that the greatest improvements in the organisation of the Army Hospital Service in the nineteenth century were due. It is admitted that no change in the administration of the Factory Department has been so fruitful for good as the appointment of women factory inspectors. Why, then, are not professional women called in to aid in the organisation of commissariat, the inspection of clothing stores, the "housekeeping" of the Army, especially in the case of the needs of raw recruits? Incalculable waste, diversified here and there by actual lack of food, is reported from the camps. The help of expert women might here be of enormous value, and not only avoid waste, but ensure the provision of more wholesome food and more comfortable clothing. Some valuable hints on this subject are to be derived from an article by Mrs. Janet Courtney in the *Fortnightly Review*, February 1915, "The War and Women's Employment."

Such an association may have great results, directly in the attainment of the objects set forth, indirectly in the stimulating of public spirit and a sense of citizenship among women.

There is, however, little ground for hoping that the war will of itself lead to social measures of reconstruction or to the development of a better-organised state, whether in regard to women or in regard to labour generally. Some can find spiritual comfort and sustenance in the idea that by fighting German militarism we are destroying tyranny and despotism among ourselves. On the contrary, it may be that in fighting we are impelled to use as a weapon and may be giving a new lease of life to precisely those tendencies, those forces in our own social life which we are opposing among the Germans for all we are worth. Class domination, the rule of the strongest, and the idealisation of brute force are not peculiar to Germany, although unquestionably, as we have been driven to see, they have there reached an extraordinary exuberance. But the same tendencies are here, and we may be sure democracy will not come of itself, merely as a result of the war. War inevitably means for the time the predominance of man over woman, the predominance of the soldier over the industrial, the predominance of reaction over democracy. It is significant that the stress of war was quickly seized as a pretext for suspending the protection of industrial workers by the State, and for relaxing the Education Acts which normally interpose some hindrance to the exploitation of children by the capitalist employer. The clamour for compulsion and the shameless underpayment of women in some branches of war work are signs of the same reaction. Yet in the long run the

apparently weaker elements of society are as vitally necessary as the stronger, and to ignore or silence their needs is to strike at the heart of life. The problems offered by the great war, gigantic and staggering as they are, are not so different in kind from, though vaster in degree and more appalling than, the problem of the industrial revolution itself. Each is a problem of the development of material civilisation, which has (we know it now too poignantly) far outdistanced the growth of civilisation on its social and spiritual side. Each includes the question whether man is to be the master or the slave of the mechanic powers his own genius has evoked. Neither can ever be solved without the conscious co-operation of Woman and Labour, failing which we must for ever fall short of the highest possibilities of our race. "If Great Britain is to lead the way in promoting a new spirit between the nations, she needs a new spirit also in the whole range of her corporate life. For what Britain stands for in the world is, in the long run, what Britain is, and when thousands are dying for her it is more than ever the duty of all of us to try to make her worthier of their devotion." [1]

[1] *The War and Democracy.* Introduction by A. E. Zimmern, p. 14. London, 1914.

Changes in Employment during the War 1914–1915.

I. *Contraction of Employment of Women and Girls. Board of Trade Figures.*

Reduction in Numbers as compared with July 1914.

Sept. 1914.	Oct.	Dec.	Feb. 1915.
8·4	6·2	3·2	1·5

II. *Cotton Trade. All Work-people, Women predominating.*

1914.	Reduction of Employment per cent of previous year.		Reduction of Earnings per cent of previous year.	
	Lancashire and Cheshire.	Burnley.	Lancashire and Cheshire.	Burnley.
Aug.	42·1	46·0	60·9	70·7
Oct.	18·3	32·6	37·1	57·7
Dec.	9·7	19·3	20·8	38·5
Feb.	6·3	9·3	9·0	11·4
April	6·7	10·4	4·9	4·7
June	6·9	6·7	5·8	6·5

III. *Percentage Increase or Decrease compared with same Month in Previous Year.*

	Sept. 1914.	Nov.	Jan. 1915.	March.	May.
London Dressmakers, chiefly West End .	−11·6	−14·9	−14·7	−15·4	−13·2
Court ditto . . .	−17·3	−33·2	−37·2	−28·1	−23·3
Mantle, costume, etc., makers . . .	−15·3	− 7·6	−11·2	− 2·5	+ 0·6
Shirt and collar makers	−11·7	−11·8	−10·2	− 1·5	− 2·1

APPENDIX TO CHAPTERS II. AND IV.

DOCUMENTS AND EXTRACTS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE POSITION OF WOMEN DURING THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.

Thoughts on the Use of Machines in the Cotton Manufacture. By a Friend of the Poor. Manchester Reference Library, 677, 1, B. 12. (Barnes, 1780.)

"What a prodigious difference have our machines made in the gain of the females of the family! Formerly the chief support of a poor family arose from the loom. The wife could get comparatively but little on her single spindle. But for some years a good spinner has been able to get as much as or more than a weaver. For this reason many weavers have become spinners, and by this means such quantities of cotton warps, twists, wefts, etc., have been poured into the country that our trade has taken a new turn. All the spinners in the country could not possibly have produced so much as this, as are now wanted in a small part of our manufacture. If it were true that a weaver gets less, yet, as his wife gets more, his family does not suffer. But the fact is that the gains of an industrious family have been upon the average much greater than they were before these inventions."

Page 16. "When I look upon our machines, with a regard to the *Poor*, and as *their friend and well-wisher*, my heart glows with gratitude and pleasure on their account, in the full hope that, by means of them, our manufactures will *continue*, and be *extended* and *improved*, from age to age. *Perhaps*, e'er long, our manufacture

may be *chiefly of cotton*. *Linen* may be almost *laid aside*. Suppose, for instance, *common yearn* could be brought to market, made with *cotton warps*. What a sale might we expect! *Such goods* would have the demand of *all the world*. Nor is this at all unlikely to be the case, in some future time. Already cotton yarn has been offered to sale, as I am very credibly informed, *almost*, if not *entirely*, as cheap as linen yarn, of the *same length*. *Germany* and *Ireland* then *have* reason to be alarmed at our machines. Their yarn manufactures may suffer severely. But surely this will be the highest advantage to us, by increasing the quantity of *labour* amongst ourselves and keeping so much *money* at home. *Perhaps*, by new improvements, we may vie with the *East India* goods in fineness and beauty. And then—what a prospect would open upon us! But you say all this is a mere *perhaps*. It is so. And I only offer it as such. But, I ask, is it more *unlikely* than our present improvements were, *twenty years ago*? I believe not. Some tradesmen thought the cotton manufacture at its *highest pitch then*. It was *then* but in its infancy. Perhaps it is so yet. Human ingenuity, when spurred on by proper rewards, *may leave* whatever has been done *already* at a vast distance. We may have goods brought to market, *cheaper*, *finer*, *better*. The necessary consequence of this will be, the demand *will increase* and all the world become our *customers*. If we can *undersell* all the world, we may have the *custom* of all the world. Merchants are alike all the world over. They will go to the *cheapest market*. What a pleasing thought is this! But in order to do this it is necessary to *encourage* our machines, and to keep them as much as possible to *ourselves*."

Description of Interior of a Cotton Mill, in *A Short Essay for the Service of the Proprietors of Cotton Mills and the Persons Employed in Them*. Manchester, 1784. (M/c Library, 28269/4.)

(Quotes instances of jail fever from overcrowding, etc.)
Page 9. "The Cotton Mills are large buildings, but so

constructed as to employ the greatest possible number of persons. That no room may be lost, the several stories are built as low as possible. Most of the rooms are crowded with machines, about which it is necessary to employ a considerable quantity of oil in order to facilitate their motion. From the nature of the manufacture, a great deal of cotton dust is constantly flying about, which, adhering to the oil and heated by the friction, occasions a strange and disagreeable smell. The number of people who work in the mill must certainly be proportioned to the size of it. In a large one I am informed there are several hundreds. . . . The manufacturers, in many instances, constantly labour day and night.[1] Of course a great number of candles must be used, and scarce any opportunity for ventilation afforded. From hence it is evident that there is a considerable effluvia constantly arising from the bodies of a large number of persons (well or in a degree indisposed, just as it happens), from the oil and cotton dust, and from the candles used in the night, without any considerable supply of fresh air. There are indeed trifling casements, sometimes opened and sometimes not; but totally insufficient to subserve any valuable purpose. . . . What consequences must we expect from so many pernicious circumstances? What are the consequences which have actually proceeded from them? As we have already observed, it is well known that there has been a contagious disorder in a cotton mill in the neighbourhood of Manchester which has been fatal to many, and infected more. . . . Most of the patients that were ill, having been asked where they caught the fever, either replied that they caught it themselves at the cotton mill or were infected by others that had. Several were asked what kind of labour they followed who were first seized with the disorder. They all replied, they were the people that worked in the cotton mill."

[1] It should be observed that the first proprietors of some cotton mills, alarmed by the consequences of obliging their servants to work incessantly, have shut up their mills in the night.

Leicester, 1788. British Museum Tracts, B. 544 (10).

Humble Petition of the Poor Spinners, which on a very moderate calculation consist of Eighteen Thousand, Five Hundred, employed in the Town and Country aforesaid,

Sheweth, that the business of *Spinning*, in all its branches, hath ever been, time out of mind, the peculiar employment of women; insomuch that every single woman is called in law a *Spinster*; to which employment your Petitioners have been brought up, and by which they have hitherto earned their maintenance. That this employment above all others is suited to the condition and circumstances of the *Female Poor*; inasmuch as not only single women, but married ones also, can be employed in it consistently with the necessary cares of their families; for, the business being carried on in their own houses, they can at any time leave it when the care of their families requires their attendance, and can re-assume the work when family duty permits it; nay, they can, in many instances, carry on their work and perform their domestic duty at the same time; particularly in the case of attending a sick husband or child, or an aged parent.

That the children of the poor can also be employed in this occupation more or less, according to their age and strength, which is not only a great help to the maintenance of the family, but inures their children to habits of industry.

. . . . . .

It is therefore with great concern your Petitioners see that this antient employment is likely to be taken from them —an employment so consistent with civil liberty, so full of domestic comfort, and so favourable to a religious course of life. This we apprehend will be the consequences of so many spinning mills, now erecting after the model of the cotton mills. The work of the poor will be done by these engines, and they left without employment.

The proprietors of the spinning mills do indeed tell your Petitioners that their children shall be employed after the manner of the children at the cotton mills. Your Petitioners have enquired what that manner is; and with grief of

heart they find that a vast number of poor children are crowded together in an unhealthy place, have no time allowed them for recreation and exercise, are kept to work for ten or twelve hours together, and that in the night-time as well as by day; hereby they become cripples and emaciated beyond measure. That no care is taken of their morals, as your Petitioners can learn; though these very children are the means by which their masters are raised to wealth and honours too; for we have heard that a certain great *mill-monger* is newly *created* a knight though he was not *born* a gentleman.

. . . . . .

The adventurers are turning their cotton mills into jersey mills, and new ones are daily erecting; and our masters show what their expectations are by undervaluing our work and beating down our wages.[1]

1800. Broadsheet, pp. 942, 72, L. 15 (M/c Library).

(This broadsheet records the resolutions carried at a special meeting of merchants, manufacturers, and cotton spinners held at Manchester, May 2, 1800, to consider proceedings of meetings recently held for the purpose of getting Parliament to put a duty on exportation of cotton twist.)

Resolved—1. That cotton spinning is a manufacture of the first importance to this country. That it gives employment to a considerable part of the national capital and to a very large portion of the poor of this county and of several other counties, the chief part consisting of women and children who, by means of this manufacture, are rendered highly useful to the community at large instead of *being a burthen on it, as they would be if not employed in cotton mills* (italics added).

[1] A certain manufacturer of worsted threatened a sister of ours, whom he employed, that he would send all his jersey to be spun at the mill; and further insulted her with the pretended superiority of that work. She having more spirit than discretion, stirred up the sisterhood, and they stirred up all the men they could influence (not a few) to go and destroy the mills erected in and near Leicester, and this is the origin of the late riots there.

Broadsheet in Manchester Library (n. d.).

(Purports to be by an old weaver, deprecating attacks on machinery.) "If machinery is destroyed, how are your children to be employed, who now, at an age in which children in other countries gain nothing, can support themselves? Yes, and not only this, but can earn as much, or even more, than a hardworking man in other countries, where there are not these improvements? It is thus that our poor are enabled to marry early and support a family, as the children, instead of being a deadweight upon their parents, can more than do for themselves. So great, indeed, have been our comforts from the demand for our cheap manufactures and the plenty of employ, that people have flocked into Lancashire from all parts of the kingdom by thousands, tens of thousands, aye, and hundreds of thousands too.

. . . . . .

"If they (machines) are destroyed, how then are you to find support for yourselves and your families? Where will your children of seven, eight, or nine years old find employment and money to contribute to the comforts of all? Will our barren moors support them?"

From Alfred's *History of the Factory Movement*, vol. i. p. 16.

When the first factories were erected, it was soon discovered that there was in the minds of the parents a strong repugnance to the employment thus provided for children: the native domestic labourers, being then able amply to provide for their children, rejected the tempting offers of the mill-owners, the parents preferring to rear their children in their own homes, and to train them to their own handicrafts. For a long period it was by the working people themselves considered to be disgraceful to any father who allowed his child to enter the factory—nay, in the homely words of that day, as will be remembered by the old men of the present age, "that parent made himself the town's talk"—and the unfortunate girl so given up by her parents

in after life found the door of household employment closed against her—"Because she had been a factory girl." It was not until the condition of portions of the working class had been reduced that it became the custom with working men to eke out the means of their subsistence by sending their children to the mills. Until that sad and calamitous custom prevailed, the factories in England were worked by "stranger-children," gathered together from the workhouse.

Under the operation of the factories' apprentice system parish apprentices were sent, without remorse or enquiry, from the workhouses in England, to be "used up" as the "cheapest raw material in the market." This inhuman conduct was systematically practised; the mill-owners communicated with the overseer of the poor, and when the demand and supply had been arranged to the satisfaction of both the contracting parties, a day was fixed for the examination of "the little children" to be inspected by the mill-owner, or his agent, previous to which the authorities of the workhouse had filled the minds of their wards with the notion that by entering the mills they would become ladies and gentlemen. . . . It sometimes happened that traffickers contracted with the overseers, removing their juvenile victims to Manchester, or other towns, on their arrival; if not previously assigned, they were deposited sometimes in dark cellars, where the merchant dealing in them brought his customers; the mill-owners, by the light of lanthorns, being enabled to examine the children, their limbs and stature having undergone the necessary scrutiny, the bargain was struck, and the poor innocents were conveyed to the mills. The general treatment of those apprentices depended entirely on the will of their masters; in very many instances their labour was limited only by exhaustion after many modes of torture had been unavailingly applied to force continued action; their food was stinted, coarse, and unwholesome. In "brisk times" the beds (such as they were) were never cool, the mills were worked night and day, and as soon as one set of children rose for labour the other set retired for

rest. We dare not trust ourselves to write all we know on this subject, much less all we feel. . . . The moral nature of the traffic between parish authorities and the buyers of pauper children, may be judged from the fact that in some cases one idiot was accepted with twenty sane children. . . . In stench, in heated rooms, amid the constant whirling of a thousand wheels, have little fingers and little feet been kept in ceaseless action, forced into unnatural activity by blows from the heavy hands and feet of the merciless overlooker, and the infliction of bodily pain by instruments of punishment invented by the sharpened ingenuity of insatiable selfishness. . . . Some of the helpless victims . . . nightly prayed that death would come to their relief; weary of prayer, some there were who deliberately accomplished their own destruction. The annals of Litten Mill afford an instance of this kind. "Palfrey the smith had the task of riveting irons upon any of the apprentices whom the master ordered, and these were much like the irons usually put upon felons. Even young women, if suspected of intending to run away, had irons riveted upon their ankles, and reaching by long links and rings up to the hips, and in these they were compelled to walk to and from the mill and to sleep. Robert Blincoe asserts that he has known many girls served in this manner. A handsome-looking girl, about the age of twenty years, who came from the neighbourhood of Cromford, whose name was Phoebe Day, being driven to desperation by ill-treatment, took the opportunity one dinner-time, when she was alone and supposed no one saw her, to take off her shoes and throw herself into the dam at the end of the bridge, next the apprentice-house. Some one passing along and seeing a pair of shoes stopped. The poor girl had sunk once, and just as she rose above the water he seized her by the hair. . . . She was nearly gone, and it was with some difficulty her life was saved. When Mr. Needham heard of this, and being afraid the example might be contagious, he ordered James Durant, a journeyman spinner, who had been apprenticed there, to take her away to her relations at Cromford, and thus she escaped."

The Factory System. *Enquiry into the State of the Manufacturing Population.* London, 1831.

Page 12. "As a second cause of the unhealthiness of manufacturing towns we place the severe and unremitting labour. Cotton factories (which are the best in this particular) begin to work at half-past five or six in the morning and cease at half-past seven or eight at night. An interval of half an hour or forty minutes is allowed for breakfast, an hour for dinner, and generally half an hour for tea, leaving about twelve hours a day clear labour. The work of spinners and stretchers (men) is among the most laborious that exist, and is exceeded, perhaps, by that of mowing alone, and few mowers, we believe, think of continuing their labour for twelve hours without intermission. . . . The labour of the other classes of hands employed in factories, as carders, rovers, piecers, and weavers, consists not so much in their actual manual exertion, which is very moderate, as in the constant attention which they are required to keep up and the intolerable fatigue of standing for so great a length of time. We know that incessant walking for twenty-four hours was considered one of the most intolerable tortures to which witches in former times were subjected, for the purpose of compelling them to own their guilt, and that few of them could hold out for twelve; and the fatigue of standing for twelve hours, without being permitted to lean or sit down, must be scarcely less extreme. Accordingly, some sink under it, and many more have their constitutions permanently weakened and undermined.

"III. The third cause we shall assign is perhaps even more efficient than the last. The air in almost all factories is more or less unwholesome. Many of the rooms are obliged to be kept at a certain temperature (say 65 degrees Fahrenheit) for the purpose of manufacture, and from the speed of the machinery, the general want of direct communication with the external atmosphere, and from artificial heat, they often exceed the temperature. . . . But in addition to mere heat, the rooms are often ill-

ventilated, the air is filled with the effluvia of oil, and with emanations from the uncleanly persons of a large number of individuals; and, from the want of free ventilation, the air is very imperfectly oxygenated and has occasionally a most overpowering smell.[1] In a word, the hands employed in these large manufactories breathe foul air for twelve hours out of the twenty-four, and we know that few things have so specific and injurious an action on the digestive organs as the inhalation of impure air, and this fact alone would be almost sufficient to account for the prevalence of stomachic complaints in districts where manufactories abound.

"The small particles of cotton and dust with which the air in most rooms of factories is impregnated not infrequently lay the foundation of distressing and fatal diseases. When inhaled, they are a source of great pulmonary irritation, which, if it continues long, induces a species of chronic bronchitis, which, not rarely, degenerates into tubercular consumption. . . .

"IV. The fourth cause of the ill-health which prevails among the manufacturing population may be traced to the injurious influence which the weakened and vitiated constitution of the women has upon their children.[2] They are often employed in factories some years after their marriage, and during this pregnancy, and up to the very period of their confinement, which all who have attended

[1] It is, however, important to mention that cotton mills are materially improved of late years in most of these particulars, and that in some mills they exist in a much less degree than others, which shows them not to be essential and inherent.

[2] It is a curious circumstance, and one which amply merits attentive consideration, that the fecundity of females employed in manufactories seems to be considerably diminished by their occupation and habits; for not only are their families generally smaller than those of agricultural labourers, but their children are born at more distant intervals. Thus the average interval which elapses between the birth of each child in the former case is two years and one month, as we have found upon minute enquiry, while, in country districts, we believe, it seldom exceeds eighteen months. The causes of these facts we have at present no space to enlarge upon.

to the physiology of the subject know must send their offspring into the world with a debilitated and unhealthy frame which the circumstances of their infancy are ill-calculated to remove; and hence, when these children begin to work themselves they are prepared at once to succumb to the evil influences by which they are surrounded."

At page 27. "We hope we shall not greatly offend the prejudices either of political economists or practical tradesmen when we state our firm conviction, that a reduction in the hours of labour is *most important* to the health of the manufacturing population, *and absolutely necessary* to any general and material amelioration in their moral and intellectual condition. . . . It will be urged in opposition that all legislative interference in commercial concerns is, *prima facie*, objectionable, and involves the admission of a dangerous and impolitic principle. That legislative interference is in itself an evil we deeply feel and readily admit; but it is an evil like many others which necessity and policy may justify, and which humanity and justice may imperiously demand. Legislative interference is objectionable only where it is injudicious or uncalled for. It will also be objected, and with more sound reason, that a reduction of the hours of labour would cause a corresponding reduction in the quantity produced, and consequently in the wages of the workmen; and would also diminish our power of competing with other manufacturing nations in foreign market, and thus, by permanently injuring our trade, would be productive of greater evils to the labouring classes than those we are endeavouring to remove. This objection, though very reasonable, we think is considerably overstated. That 'a reduction of the hours of labour would cause a *corresponding* reduction in the quantity produced' we entirely deny. What *would* be the actual loss consequent upon a reduction of the hours it is impossible to state with any certainty, but it is probable that if factories were to work ten hours instead of twelve the loss in the quantity produced would not be one-sixth, but only about one-twelfth, and in Mule Spinning

perhaps scarcely even so much. We *know* that in some cases when the mills only worked four days in the week, they have often produced five days' quantity, and the men earned five days' wages. That this would be the case to a considerable extent every one must be aware ; as all men will be able to work much harder for ten hours than they can for twelve. The objection above mentioned we consider to be much over-stated ; and we are convinced that the *loss* incurred would only amount to a *part* of the reduction. And we think that *all* loss to the masters might be prevented, and the necessity of a *real* reduction of wages obviated, were all duties on raw materials, and those taxes which greatly raise the price of provisions, abolished by the legislature. It is principally the shackles and drawbacks to which the Cotton Manufacture is subjected which renders it so difficult, and as some think so impracticable, to adopt a measure without which all extensive and general Plans for improving and regenerating our manufacturing poor must approach the limits of impossibility. At present (in the cotton trade at least, which is already restricted by law) the hours of work generally extend from half-past five or six in the morning till half-past seven or eight at night, with about two hours' intermission, making in all about twelve hours of clear labour. This we would reduce to *ten* hours (if such a measure should be rendered practicable and safe by a removal of all taxes on manufactures and provisions) ; and we again express our conviction, after regarding the subject in every possible point of view, that till this measure is adopted all plans and exertions for ameliorating the moral and domestic condition of the manufacturing labourer can only obtain a very partial and temporary sphere of operation. We say this with confidence, because in every project of the kind which we have been enabled to form, in every attempt for this purpose which our personal acquaintance and habitual intercourse with the people could suggest, we have been met and defeated by the long hours (absorbing in fact the whole of the efficient day) which the operative is compelled to remain at his employment. When he returns

home at night, the sensorial power is worn out with intense fatigue; he has no energy left to exert in any useful object, or any domestic duty; he is fit only for sleep or sensual indulgence, the only alternatives of employment which his leisure knows; he has no moral elasticity to enable him to resist the seductions of appetite or sloth, no heart for regulating his household, superintending his family concerns, or enforcing economy in his domestic arrangements; no power or capability of exertion to rise above his circumstances or better his condition. He has no time to be wise, no leisure to be good; he is sunken, debilitated, depressed, emasculated, unnerved for effort, incapable of virtue, unfit for everything but the regular, hopeless, desponding, degrading variety of laborious vegetation or shameless intemperance. Relieve him in this particular, shorten his hours of labour, and he will find himself possessed of sufficient leisure to make it an object with him to spend that leisure well; he will not be so thoroughly enervated with his day's employment; he will not feel so imperious a necessity for stimulating liquors; he will examine more closely, and regulate more carefully, his domestic arrangements, and what is more than all, he will become a soil which the religious philanthropist may have some chance of labouring with advantage. We do not say that a reduction in the hours of labour would do everything; but we are sure that little can be done without it."

Arthur Arnold. *Cotton Famine.* 1864.

(Describing factory work.) Page 56. "In these days of automaton machinery there are many moments in every hour when the varied and immense production of a cotton factory would continue though 95 per cent of the hands were suddenly withdrawn. The work is exciting but not laborious. It quickens the eye and the action of the brain to watch a thousand threads, being obliged to dart upon and repair any that break, lest even a single spindle should be idle; and it strengthens the brain to do this with bodily labour which is exercising but not exhausting. It polishes

the mental faculties to work in continued contact with hundreds of others, in a discipline necessarily so severe and regular as that of a cotton factory. The bodily system becomes feverishly quickened by thus working in a high and moist temperature. Even the rattle of the machinery contributes to preserve the brain of the operative from that emptiness which so fatally contracts its power."

The Surat Weaver's Song

From Edwin Waugh's *Factory Folk*, p. 238.
By Samuel Laycock.

Confound it ! aw ne'er wur so woven afore ;
My back's welly broken, mi fingers are sore ;
Aw've bin stannin' an' workin' among this Surat
Till aw'm very neer gettin' as blint as a bat.

Aw wish aw wur fur eneagh off, eawt o' th' road,
For o' weaving this rubbitch aw'm gettin' reet sto'd ;
Aw've nowt i' this world to lie deawn on but straw,
For aw've nobbut eight shillen' this fortnit to draw.

Oh dear ! if yon Yankees could nobbut just see
Heaw they're clemmin' an' starvin' poor weavers like me,
Aw think they'd soon settle their bother an' strive
To send us some cotton to keep us alive.
There's theawsan's o' folk, jist i' th' best o' their days,
Wi' traces of want plainly sin i' their face ;
An' a future afore 'em as dreary as dark,
For when th' cotton gets done we's be o'-eawt o' wark.

We've bin patient an' quiet as long as we con ;
Th' bits of things we had by us are welly o' gone ;
Mi clogs an' mi shoon are both gitten worn eawt,
An mi halliday cloaths are o' gawn " up th' speawt " !
Mony a toime i' mi days aw've sin things lookin' feaw
But never as awkard as what they are neaw ;
If there is'nt some help for us factory folk soon,
Aw'm sure 'at we's o' be knock'd reet eawt o' tune.

Darwen Weavers. Report, March 1911, *The Driving Evil.*

During the last few months we have experienced a decided improvement in the demand for cotton goods, and which has naturally provided fuller employment for those employed in the weaving branch. We regret, however, to state that this improvement has brought with it that curse of our industry—the driving evil. We still have a number of employers who resort to any artifice in order to exact the last ounce of effort out of their work-people. Very little regard appears to be paid to the possibility that the health of the operatives may be endangered by the process ; nor is much consideration given to the difficulties that they have to contend with in the shape of inferior material in the loom and the higher standard of quality demanded in the warehouse. Indeed the only thing that seems to be of any importance is the average, and woe be to the unlucky individuals whose earnings fall below it. The weak and the strong are set in competition one with another, with the inevitable result that the weaker or less efficient work-people resort to such practices as working during the meal-hour, etc., in their efforts to keep up the unequal race, whilst on the top of all is the dread of what may happen after making up time. When the earnings of an over-looker's set fall below the amount required by the management, pressure is brought to bear on the over-looker, and in turn they (*sic*) are expected to put more pressure on the weaver to increase the output. The methods of speeding-up the weaver are varied. Sometimes a hint is conveyed by a distinctive mark on their wage-tickets, in other cases the weavers are spoken to about their earnings, not always in the best manner or in the choicest language. This is far from being an ideal state of things for young persons or persons of a sensitive nature to be employed in, and has in the past been responsible for some of the tragedies that are a blot on the record of the cotton industry. We think it is high time that a number of employers should give this matter their careful consideration, and look upon their work-

people as human beings and not as mere machines to be worked at the utmost speed. We hope that an early improvement will be made at some of the local concerns, otherwise there is every probability of serious trouble.

Extracts from Reports of the Principal Lady Inspector of Factories, and some of her Colleagues, illustrating the Present Position of the Woman Worker.[1]

1. *Women and Girls show more Courage in voicing their Needs.*

While we can see a great number and variety of deplorable contraventions of the actual requirements and spirit of the law and an amount of apparently preventable suffering and overstrain and injury to life, limb, and health that is grievous to dwell upon (except for action in the way of removal), we can see also, most clearly, signs of improvement and the promise of much more. The promise lies in the fact that the movement to secure better conditions is not confined to any one class or group. The women and girls at last begin to press their claims for a better life than the one they have, not only by increasing appeals to Inspectors to put the law in motion, but also by criticism of the limitations of the law and by signs of fresh courage in organising and voicing their needs to the employers. Employers are initiating reforms not only as outstanding individuals and firms, but are beginning to do so at last by associated action and effort. Without these two responsive sides of the movement the best efforts of social reformers and legislators would end but poorly. As strikingly illustrating the need of betterment, I would point not only to the instances of excessively long hours inside and outside the factories, insanitary conditions; lack of seats, mess-rooms; accidents and unfenced machinery; employment of young workers in operating and clothing dangerous machines; in excessively heavy

[1] The extracts are slightly compressed in transcription.

weight carrying, but behind, and through, and over all, to the undermining influence for the real health of the nation in the grinding methods of payment and deductions from payment of women and girls. Even of industrial poisoning Miss Whitlock says: "Poverty with its attendant worry and lack of nourishment appeared to be a predisposing cause in many cases, and the youth of many of the workers affected was noticeable," and when a woman heavily laden and worn asks, "Is it right I should have to do this kind of work and only have 8s. a week?" the Inspector can only listen and report. The sinister instances of use of homework after the legal factory day to reduce piece rates, of new deductions covering cost of employers' contributions under the Insurance Act, of old-standing large non-payments for work done to punish small unpunctualities in arrival at the factory, and of fine added to entire loss of a hardly-earned week's wage for alleged damage, are only outstanding illustrations of an extensive pressure on women's wages that prevents them from developing their full natural vitality. In every direction the testimony of the Inspectors to the value of the spirit of the industrial girl or woman is the same. Of a girl of seventeen, partially scalped, Miss Martindale says: "Her pluck and bravery were noteworthy, in fact these qualities show themselves in a remarkable degree in working girls when they meet a severe physical shock"; of another, whose hand had to be amputated after vain attempts to save it, she says that the girl mastered her disappointment, and in two or three days after the operation began to practise writing with her left hand, and in a month had become almost as proficient in writing as with the right hand. The value they attach to inspection is obvious from what follows in this report, and is shrewdly summed up in a remark overheard by a Senior Lady Inspector in a northern mill: "Yon's a Lady Inspector, nay, but it's time we had one."

2. *A Factory Worker's Letter.*

Miss Slocock.—The complaints outside the Acts received during the year have been interesting, and they often indicate in a remarkable way the workers' needs and the omissions of present legislation. Irish workers express themselves graphically and exceedingly well in writing, and the following letter is a typical one: "Dear Madam, I am sure you will think it presumption on the part of a factory worker to write to you however as pen and paper refuses nothing I venture to write you this annonamos letter. When you come to inspect a factory, does it ever strike you to look around and see if any of these weary women and girls have a seat to sit down on. I am a winder myself I have worked in a great many factories for the last 30 years one looks on their workshop just like their home why should we be denied a seat I suppose you think our work very light so it is we have no extra heavy lifts we have mettle cups that I suppose they would be 2 lb. weight or more we are pushing these up continually the whole thing is tedious just look around you and you will see some winders have not so much as a lean for their backs. I hope Dear Lady you see to this. You would never think of putting a servant to work in a kitchen without a chair in it, she would not stick it, the winders are an uncomplaining lot if you asked them would they like to be provided with seats they would smile and say they were all right, it would look to them like making complaints behind backs but don't ask us but think about us and do something for us and our children will rise up and call you blessed. I hold that rest is essential to Good Health."

3. *Lighting.*

Principal.—An increasing number of complaints is received with regard to defective natural lighting and badly adjusted or otherwise defective artificial lighting. The Inspectors do what they can to secure improvements, though,

as the matter is outside the Factory Act, in general no contravention notice or other official action is as yet practicable. Two bad cases concerning women compositors in different parts of the kingdom are specially reported; in both artificial lighting was required during the greater part of the day, and in only one of these instances is a remedy being supplied by removal to better premises. In the other case, when the women learned that lighting is still outside the Factory Act so far as their case is concerned, they exclaimed to the Senior Lady Inspector, Miss Squire, "but this is the most important thing of all to us."

Miss Squire.—Badly adjusted light which hurts the eyes was found in boot factories, where out of nine visited in one town four had the sewing-machine rooms provided with ordinary fish-tail burners on a jointed bracket at every machine—these, unshaded, were on a level with the workers' eyes and close to the face. The girls complained that the light was poor and had a smarting effect upon the eyes. The adaptation of artificial lighting to the requirements of the work receives in general very little attention, but I find that a desire for some guidance in the matter is growing among employers and managers. One difficulty is that of procuring any shade for the large metal filament electric lamps now so largely used. The glare of these in the eyes of machine operatives in all classes of factories is a troublesome accompaniment of the work, and one finds much makeshift screening by workers where such individual effort is permitted.

4. *Sanitary Accommodation.*

Principal.—It is impossible to modify in any general way the adverse description of the existing state of matters as regards actual provision of sanitary conveniences for women and girls in factory industries which I found it necessary to give in last Annual Report, and to that statement I must refer again and again until there is real and complete reform. The women Inspectors have nearly doubled their efforts to raise the standard somewhat in factories, and notices about

them to local sanitary authorities have risen from 538 in 1912 to 1029 in 1913, in addition to 146 notices with regard to workshops. Direct contravention notices to occupiers numbered 249, while complaints from workers numbered 170, some of them being very strong in regard to the unsuitability of the conveniences provided. The one important area in which a decided improvement is reported is the potteries area, where members of this branch have been steadily at work for many years, but on the whole the Midlands and the Lancashire Divisions have still most work to be done in this direction, for in the former Miss Martindale reports that 381 of the notices to sanitary authorities touched this one matter, and in the latter Miss Tracey reports similarly 308 notices.

Miss Tracey.—The outstanding defect of all others in this north-west division is the sanitary accommodation provided for women. It is impossible to describe in a public paper how low the standard has been and still is, in many places, where in other respects the conditions are not only not noticeably bad, but are quite good. . . . Absence of doors and screens, uncleanliness and insanitary conditions can all be remedied by the sanitary authority, and in the large towns at any rate notices of these matters have received prompt attention, but there still remains the question of unsuitability of position. Many examples might be given. In a waterproof factory four or five girls were employed in an "overflow" workroom of a larger factory, and worked in an upper room; in the lower room about a dozen men and youths were at work. To reach the sanitary convenience it is necessary for the girls to walk across the men's room and through a narrow space between rows of machines at which the men are sitting, and the wall at the far end of which the sanitary convenience is situated. . . . There is no doubt that glass panels in doors, commoner still, no doors, no bolts, no provision for privacy is all calculated to "prevent waste of time," and it is a pathetic comment on employment that there should be this improper supervision and control of decent and respectable women. That they do sometimes stay longer than is actually

necessary in these places is of course a fact well known to me, but to my thinking it only shows how great the strain is on women and girls that they should desire rest so obtained. When one thinks of the perpetual striving, the work which must never slacken, the noise which never ceases and of the legs which are weary with constant standing, of the heads which ache, because the noise is so great no voice can be heard above the din, one can understand that to sit on the floor for a few moments' talk, as I have often seen, is a rest which under even such horrid circumstances is better than nothing. Proper conveniences and the supervision of a nice woman would do away with all the drawbacks which employers foresee in complying with the standard laid down in the Order of the Secretary of State so long ago as 1903.

5. *Fire Escapes.*

Miss Tracey.—In one factory I visited to see an escape recently put up at the instance of the local authority, and I found quite a good iron staircase and platform. This was reached by a window which had been made to open in such a way that it completely blocked the staircase and gave but a tiny space even on the platform, and the aid of the local officer was again invoked. Miss Stevenson reports that in the newer cotton mills a proper outside iron staircase with a handrail is to be found, but the construction of the older fire escapes shows a great lack of common sense. In the first place, the narrow, almost perpendicular ladder without a handrail is peculiarly unsuited for the use of women. The openings from the platform to the ladders are exceedingly small, and the exit window is generally 3 to 4 feet above the floor level, no steps or footholds being provided. To increase the difficulty the exit window is sometimes made to swing out across the platform, cutting off access to the downward ladder. In two cases the ladder, and in one case a horizontal iron pipe also, ran right across the window, rendering egress impossible except to the

slender. In both cases the next window was free from obstruction.

Miss Taylor.—Sometimes as many as 100 persons are employed on each floor of a high building, so that if the outside staircase had to be used those in the upper floors would, as they descended, meet the occupants of the lower floors crowding on to the landings. I have never been to a factory where they had such a fire drill as might obviate the possibility of overcrowding on these escapes. The women flatly, and I think, rightly, decline to attempt the descent, on the plea that they do not wish to incur the danger of it until it is absolutely necessary. I have sometimes been told by the managers of the factories that they themselves would never reach the bottom safely if they attempted to go down. Such escapes are to be found on quite 50 per cent of the cotton mills in Lancashire, and as they were put up on the authority of the sanitary authority it is difficult to get rid of them, but one cannot help thinking that there may be very serious loss of life if the circumstances of a fire should be such that the workers were obliged to resort to these outside escapes.

6. *Lead Poisoning.*

Miss Tracey.—I spent many days in visiting the cases which had been certified, and in visiting other cases of illness which were not directly certified, as due to lead. I visited these workers at their homes and found them in different stages of illness and convalescence. Their pluck will always remain fixed in my mind; although many of them were unable to put into words the sufferings they had gone through, yet not one of them but was eagerly wishing to be well enough to go back to work. When, as is so common now, women are accused of malingering, I often wish that complainants would accompany me on my investigation of cases of accident or poisoning at the workers' homes, for I know that, like me, these people would return in a humbled frame of mind, recognising courage and

endurance under circumstances which would break many of us. Without these home visits it would have been impossible to gauge the extent and severity of the outbreak of illness.

7. *Hours of Work and Overtime.*

Miss Tracey.—Often we receive complaint of the burden of the long twelve hours' day, and the strain it is to start work at 6 A.M. A well-known man in a Lancashire town was telling me only the other day about how he would wake in the morning to the clatter of the girls' and women's clogs as they went past his house at half-past five in the dark on their way to the mills. He had exceptional opportunity of judging of the effect of the long day's work, and he told me how bonny children known to him lost their colour and their youthful energy in the hard drudgery of this daily toil. How the girls would fall asleep at their work, and how they grew worn and old before their time. We see it for ourselves, and the women tell us about it. Sometimes one feels that one dare not contemplate too closely the life of our working women, it is such a grave reproach. I went to a woman's house to investigate what appeared a simple, almost commonplace, accident. She was a middle-aged, single woman, living alone. Six weeks before my visit she had fainted at her work, and in falling (she was a hand gas ironer) she had pulled the iron on her hand, that and the metal tube had severely burnt both arm and hand. She was quite incapacitated. She told me she left home at 5.15, walked 2½ miles to the factory, stood the whole day at her work, and at 6, sometimes later, started to walk home again, and then had to prepare her meal, mend and do her housework. This case is only typical of thousands of women workers. She got her 7s. 6d. insurance money, and that was all. She made no effort to enlist my sympathy, but just stated the facts quite simply. Her case is not so bad as many, for in addition to their own needs, a married woman or a widow with children has also to see to the needs of the family, meals, washing and mending, and the hundred and one other duties that are required to keep a home going.

In Scotland Miss Vines says that the largest proportion of complaints relates to excessive hours of employment, while on investigation they are found sometimes to be within the legal limits, and "there is no doubt that the working of the full permissible period of employment does sometimes entail an intolerable strain on the workers."

Miss Meiklejohn.—There has again been in West London a marked decrease in the overtime reported this year. The opinion seems to be that systematic overtime in the season does not really help forward the work, and that the extension should be used, as was intended, in an emergency only. There is a tendency to shorten the ordinary working hours, as well as to work as little overtime as possible.

8. *Employment of Women before and after Childbirth.*

There can be little doubt that provision of maternity benefit under the Insurance Act has materially lightened the burden of compliance with the limit of women for four weeks after childbirth before they may return to industrial employment. Complaints of breach of s. 61 have dropped to eight in 1913, and complaints (outside the scope of the section) of employment just before confinement have dropped to one. Even in Dundee, where this evil of heavy employment of child-bearing women has been probably the worst in the kingdom, an improvement of the situation is seen.

Miss Vines.—I visited a group of twelve jute-mill working mothers within a month after their confinement and found that only one of them had returned to work, nine of the mothers were married and experiencing the good effects of the Insurance Act benefit. The unmarried women were, of course, getting less benefit, and were not so well off; one of them worked as a jute spinner in a jute mill till 6 P.M. on the night her baby was born.

9. *Truck Act.*

Principal.—The illustrations sent me of the mass of work done in 1913 under the modern part of the law relating to

truck are too numerous to be reproduced here. Typical instances must be selected from different industrial centres for the main points of (*a*) disciplinary fines, (*b*) deductions or payments for damage, short weight, etc., (*c*) deductions or payments for power, materials or anything supplied in relation to labour of the worker; abuses of the "bonus" system may be connected with (*a*) or (*b*). The main features of these illustrations are the poverty of the workers, the rigidity and poverty of mind that controls workers by such methods, and the need for fresh and living ideas to sweep away all these defective, obsolete ways of control.

Disciplinary Fines.

Miss Tracey.—I had a long struggle with the occupier of a large laundry in Lancashire over fines for coming late. The work started at 6, and it was said that only three minutes (supposed to be five), were allowed as grace. The weekly wages were phenomenally small, but no work was demanded on Saturdays unless under exceptional circumstances. If a girl came to the laundry after the gate was closed (three minutes after 6 A.M.), she was shut out till after breakfast, a fine was inflicted for late attendance, and if this happened more than once, one-sixth of the total wage was deducted for Saturday, although no work was required. I found these fines to amount to as much as 1s. 8d. out of a wage of 4s. 6d., and other sums in proportion. This iniquitous custom had been followed for twenty years, and I was assured that it was a case of "adjustment of wages" and did not come under the Truck Act. However, my view eventually prevailed; certain sums were repaid and the whole system done away with, without bringing the case into Court. In other respects, the laundry was a good one, and no work on Saturday is an arrangement that is of great benefit to young and old workers alike. The plan now adopted is that a girl consistently unpunctual during the week will be required to come in on Saturday morning to do a few hours' work—this plan has worked so well that no one, when I last visited, had been in the laundry on Saturday at all.

Miss Slocock.—(1) Two girls, aged respectively eighteen

and nineteen, employed as cutters, were fined £2 : 14s. and 11s. 2d. for cutting some handkerchiefs badly and damaging the cloth. The deductions were made at the rate of 1s. per week, and at the time of my visit, each worker had already had 10s. 6d. deducted from her wages. Proceedings were considered, but the employer, directly his attention was drawn to the matter, refunded 5s. 6d. to one worker and agreed not to make any further deduction from the other, so that one girl paid 5s. for damage amounting to 11s. 2d. and the other 10s. 6d. for damage amounting to £2 : 14s. These amounts, 11s. 2d. and £2 : 14s. represented exactly the whole loss to the firm caused by the damaged work, and the employer thought that he was acting legally so long as the deductions did not exceed that amount. The fact that the Truck Act specifically draws attention to this limitation is constantly brought to my notice, and used as an excuse for putting the whole cost of any damage on the workers. The average gross weekly wage earned by these workers for the eleven weeks during which deductions were being made was 8s. 1d. and 10s. 10½d. respectively.

(2) Two workers employed as shirt machinists were told they would both be fined 5s. for spoiling two shirts each by mixing the cloth. The difference in the cloth was so slight that I could hardly distinguish it in daylight, and the workers had machined the shirts by artificial light. The contract under which these deductions were made provided that the cost price of the material damaged should not be exceeded ; the firm admitted that the cost price of the material was not more than 1s. 6d. each shirt, and a fine of 2s. 6d. from each worker (1s. 3d. for each shirt) was ultimately imposed.

Miss Escreet.—Many instances of deductions for damage have touched the borderland where non-payment of wages for work done badly approximates to a deduction of payment in respect of bad work. Action in such cases is very difficult—when sums like 5s. 5d. and 3s. are deducted from wages of 10s. 7d. and 13s. 4d. in a weaving shed and metal factory respectively, there is no question that the workers look rightly for the protection of the Truck Acts, which

were surely framed to control this very kind of arbitrary handling of hardly earned wage. Enquiry into these cases invariably brings to light other considerations than the mere fact of damaged work. Some managers find it difficult to realise that bad work is bound to be a feature attendant on pressure for great output, especially if the workers are inexperienced and ill-taught, or if the piece-work rates are so low that the workers cannot afford to use care, and are obliged to trust to luck and a lenient "passer."

10. *Lenience of Magistrates to Employer.*

Principal.—We have to occasionally reckon with Benches who consider a few shillings' penalty, or even 1d. penalty, sufficient punishment for excessive overtime employment of girls, or with others who are reluctant to convict, or punish with more than cost of proceedings, law-breaking employers who are shown to have been thoroughly instructed in the law they have neglected to obey. It is in my belief an open question whether the tender treatment of the Probation of Offenders Act was ever designed to apply to the case of fully responsible adults officially supplied by abstracts with the knowledge and understanding of an industrial code which is intended to protect the weakest workers.

(A Leaflet issued from a Trade Union Office)

——— & DISTRICT WEAVERS, WINDERS, WARPERS & REELERS' ASSOCIATION.

(Branch of the Amalgamated Weavers' Association)

OFFICES: TEXTILE HALL, ———.

WINDERS AND THE BARBER KNOTTER.* A Few Facts for Non-Union Winders.

Have you ever considered what it costs you through not joining your Trade Union?

Study the following facts:

Many winders have five per cent. deducted each week from their wages for using the "Barber" Knotter.

Five per cent. on 15s. per week is 9d.

9d. per week is £1 17s. 6d. for every 50 weeks you work. If you work with one of these knotters for three years your employer has been paid **more** than the original cost; but they continue to stop the five per cent. and the knotter still belongs to the employer. If you work at a mill ten years and pay five per cent. all the time you cannot take the knotter with you when you leave.

Think about it. You pay for it three or four times over, but it doesn't belong to you. **Oh, no!**

We ask you to pay **5d.** to your Trade Union so that we can **stop your employer from keeping 9d. out of your wages.**

If you would rather pay 9d. to your employers than 5d. to your Trade Union you have **LESS SENSE** than we thought you had.

"But," you say, "we can earn more money with a knotter." Quite true, but you are paid on "**production,**" so if you get

* The barber knotter is a small appliance worn on the hand to assist the work of winding.

more money it is only because you turn more work off, and in turning more work off your

Employers get a Greater Production

out they make **YOU** pay for it.

The knotter enables you to piece up at a quicker rate; this saves time. It enables you to make smaller knots, thus making better work. The two combined makes

Quantity and Quality.

The employers get **both** and make you pay for it.

We say to you that it is no part of your duty to pay for improved machinery. If it is beneficial to the employers to improve any part of any machine they'll do it without consulting you, but we hold that if by doing this they get a greater and better production then they ought to **ADVANCE** your wages and not deduct five per cent. from them.

Think! Think! Think!

View the matter over in your own minds.

Reason the matter from your own point of view.

If you are satisfied with the present system, well, **DON'T GRUMBLE.**

If you're not, **What are you going to do to stop it?** Have you a remedy? If so, what is it?

If you haven't, **WE HAVE!**

Organisation is the only solution!

Trade Unionism will solve the problem for you, but

You'll have to pay and not pout!

„ „ act „ shout!

Pay 5d. and keep the 9d.! Fight and don't Funk.

DON'T HESITATE---AGITATE!

If you have eyes—SEE! If you have ears—HEAR!

JOIN THE UNION!

Bring your grievances to the Officials!

But join---Delay is Dangerous---Join at once!

————, Secretary.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VII.

Resolutions submitted by the National Federation of Women Workers to the Trade Union Congress, 1915.

"(*a*) That all women who register for war service should immediately join the appropriate trade union in the trade for which they are volunteering service, and that membership of such organisation should be the condition of their employment for war service, and that those trade unions which exclude women be urged to admit women as members.

"(*b*) That where a woman is doing the same work as a man she should receive the same rate of pay, and that the principle of equal pay for equal work should be rigidly maintained."

Manchester and District Women's War Interests Committee.

The Committee was formed as a result of the Joint action of the Women's Emergency Corps and the Manchester and District Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies. Representatives were invited from the Women's organisations . . . and the trade unions interested in women in munition works. The Gasworkers and the Workers' Union also asked for representation and were accepted.

The Committee carried through an investigation of women in munition works, and discovered that 12s. to 15s. was the standard wage, which was lower than the standard, or usual women's rates in the district, which were about £1.

It was therefore proposed that the Committee work for a minimum wage for women in munition works, and the programme, of which a copy is enclosed, was drawn up. This was presented to the Trade Union section of the Lancashire No. 1 Armaments Output Committee and received their hearty support.

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers recognised the National Federation of Women Workers as the organisation to take in women munition workers, and the local secretaries were instructed to co-operate with this body wherever a branch exists. There being no branch in the Manchester area the Amalgamated Society of Engineers recognised the Women's War Interests Committee as the representative women's organisation. Great help has been given to the Committee by their officials.

The Committee does not itself undertake to organise the women, but passed a resolution to the effect that it would co-operate with any movement towards organisation of the women which is undertaken as a result of joint agreement with the interested trade unions.

The following proposals have been agreed upon by the Committee for the employment of women in ammunition works, to form the basis of representations to the Ministry of Munitions:—

Wages.—That a guaranteed minimum of £1 per week of 48 hours should be paid to every adult woman worker (over 18 years) employed on munitions. Piecework rates, irrespective of class of labour employed, should remain unaltered.

Hours.—That a three-shift system of 8 hours is preferable to continuous overtime for women. No woman should be employed on night work for more than two weeks out of six.

Conditions.—That ample canteen provision be provided, this to be obligatory where night work is in operation.

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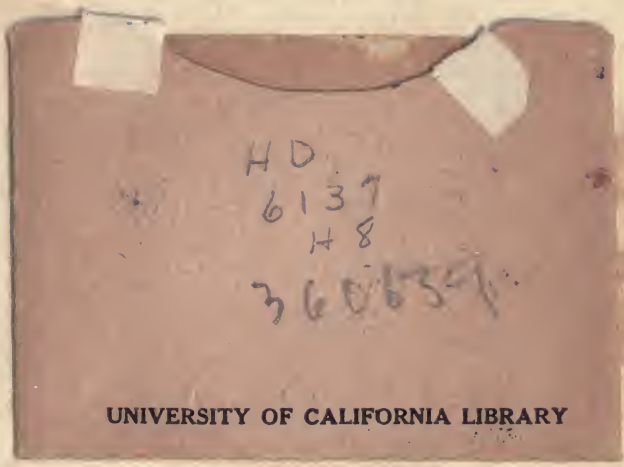
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